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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 28 JUNE 2025 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 2 MUHARRAM, 1447 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 174 | Pages: 8

Trump says 'very big' trade deal coming up with India

MEA says, the most important partnership of 21st century

WASHINGTON, 27 JUNE

US President Donald Trump said America is going to have a "very big" trade deal with India, hinting at significant progress in the negotiation process of a long-awaited bilateral trade agreement between the two countries.

"We're having some great deals. We have one coming up, maybe with India, a very big one, where we're going to open up India," Trump said during an event at the White House promoting passage of the GOP's tax and spending cuts legislation on Thursday.

"In the China deal, we're starting to open up China. Things that never really could have happened, and the relationship with every country has been very good," Trump said.

> **(Trump) calls it a 'very big deal.' It better be - given that it led to the abrupt end of Operation Sindoor. As is now becoming evident, India has to get to know decisions of great importance to it from the White House in Washington DC**
>
> —Jairam Ramesh, Congress General Secretary

He claimed that every country wanted to make a deal, and his administration was working overtime.

"You remember a few months ago, the press was saying, 'Do you really have anybody of any interest?' We have everybody. We're not going to make deals with everybody. Some we're just going to send them a letter and say thank you very much. You're going to pay 25 per cent, 35 per cent, 45 per cent. That's the easy way to do it, and my people don't want to do it that way. They want to do some of it, but they want to make more deals than I would do," he said.

Trump's remarks come as an Indian team headed by chief negotiator Rajesh Agarwal on Thursday arrived in Washington for the next round of trade talks with the US. Agrawal is the Special Secretary in the Department of Commerce.

India and the US are engaged in negotiations for an interim trade deal and are trying to finalise a pact before 9 July.

India on Thursday had said it has "noted" the recent visit of Pakistan Army chief to the White House, even as it asserted that the India-US partnership is grounded in shared democratic values, and "we remain confident in the trajectory of this most consequential partnership of the 21st century". —*PTI*

A truck carrying wreckage of the Air India plane that recently crashed into a medical hostel and its canteen complex, in Ahmedabad **PHOTO: PTI**

India rejects UN investigators for AI plane crash probe

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

India has opted not to permit a United Nations investigator to join the inquiry into the tragic crash of an Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, which resulted in the deaths of 270 people in Ahmedabad on 12 June. Sources informed Reuters that the decision comes amid concerns from safety experts regarding delays in the analysis of vital black box data.

Earlier this week, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) offered assistance by deploying one of its investigators—a move regarded as unusual, given previous instances where the agency was invited to assist after major incidents, such as the downing of a Malaysian flight in 2014 and a Ukrainian airliner in 2020. However, India's authorities declined ICAO's request to grant observer status to the investigator.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB), leading the investigation, did not respond to requests for comment. The Civil Aviation Ministry revealed that investigators managed to download flight recorder data approximately two weeks after the crash occurred. Questions have arisen regarding the location where the recorders will be examined, as the National Transportation Safety Board from the US is involved in the inquiry. Under international regulations outlined in "Annex 13," decisions concerning the examination of flight recorders should be made promptly to prevent future tragedies, yet the government's communication on the matter has been limited. A preliminary report is anticipated within 30 days of the accident. —*Agencies*

CM flags major lapses in police department

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday expressed concern over the quality of police investigation and intelligence operations in the State. Charing a review meeting with senior police officials, the CM expressed displeasure over the stampede near Chinnaswamy Stadium on 4 June, which claimed 11 lives and left 33 others injured. "I have been an MLA since 1983. I have never seen such a stampede before. What is the use of the intelligence department if they cannot provide timely?" he said. Following the incident, several senior police officials were suspended. "I am too upset that senior officials had to be suspended. But wasn't there a clear lapse on their part?" Siddaramaiah asked. Addressing the law and order situation in Mangaluru, he questioned why no suo moto action was being taken. —*PTI*

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Three held in law student gangrape case in Kolkata

KOLKATA, 27 JUNE

A 24-year-old woman has alleged she was raped at a law college in Kolkata, leading to the arrest of three individuals: Manojit Mishra, 31, a contractual staffer, and two students, Zaib Ahmed, 19 and Pramit Mukherjee, 20. Mishra, a former student and former leader of the Trinamool Chhatra Parishad, is said to have sexually assaulted the woman while the others allegedly locked the door from outside. The case, coming on the memory of the RG Kar gangrape has spurred protests in the state and attracted the attention of the National Commission for Women. —*PTI*

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OCEAN OF DEVOTION

Rath Yatra celebrations at the Jagannath Temple, in Puri, Odisha on Friday. One of the oldest chariot festivals in India, Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra are paraded to the temple **PHOTO: PTI**

Bommai acquitted in derogatory remarks case

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

The Karnataka High Court on Friday set aside two criminal cases filed against BJP leader and former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai, which alleged he made objectionable remarks during a protest rally criticising the Waqf Board and the State government over alleged encroachment on farmers' and temples' properties.

Justice SR Krishna Kumar, delivering the order, observed that the allegations were too vague and lacked substance. It noted that aside from Bommai's statement -- "wherever a stone is thrown, Waqf property is found" -- the complaint did not contain specific elements that could sustain charges under the said provision.

Declaring that pursuing the case would amount to an abuse of legal process, the court quashed the proceedings against Bommai. —*PTI*

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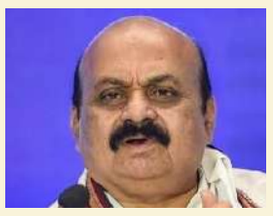

—Siddaramaiah, Karnataka Chief Minister

Cars from MP CM Mohan Yadav's convoy being pushed after 19 vehicles stalled after getting adulterated diesel **Photo: PTI**

ADULTERATED FUEL STOPS 19 CARS IN MP CM'S CONVOY

RATLAM, 27 JUNE

In a strange turn of events, a Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's convoy of 19 vehicles broke down after they were allegedly refuelled with adulterated petrol and diesel, officials said on Friday.

Shalini Shrivastava, Additional Collector, said that the convoy had stopped at the Shakti Fuels petrol pump in Dosigaon around 10pm on Thursday. Shortly after refuelling, the engines began to fail, and the vehicles had to be pushed to the roadside.

Stranded by the side of the road, the CM and his convoy had to call for backup, including officials to test the petrol.

The administration collected fuel samples for analysis. Some drivers reported discovering water mixed in the fuel, which brought the cars to a grinding halt.

New vehicles ferried the CM and to his scheduled visit to Ratlam for the Regional Industry, Skill and Employment Conclave. —*PTI*

MAN FOUND DEAD IN BLUE DRUM IN PUNJAB

LUDHIANA, 27 JUNE

In a case reminiscent of the notorious Meerut murder, a man's decomposed body was discovered wrapped in a plastic sack within a blue drum in Ludhiana, Punjab. The grim find was reported after a foul odour prompted local ragpickers to alert the police. The victim, presumed to be a migrant, had his neck and legs bound with rope, raising suspicions of foul play.

Station House Officer Kulwant Kaur stated that the body, now in the Civil Hospital's mortuary for post-mortem examination, showed no visible injury marks, although the condition was quite advanced. Investigators believe the drum, identified as brand new, suggests a premeditated murder.

Police have compiled a list of 42 drum manufacturing units in the area and are scrutinising CCTV footage from a 5km radius around the crime scene.

This incident evokes memories of the March murder of Meerut's Saurabh Rajput, whose body was discovered sealed in a blue drum. That case involved Rajput's wife, Muskan Rastogi, and her lover, Sahil Shukla, both currently jailed for their alleged roles in the crime. —*Agencies*

RSS wants to remove 'socialist', 'secular' from the Preamble

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale's call for reviewing the words 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble of the Constitution is not about dismantling it but about restoring its "original spirit", according to an article published in an RSS-linked magazine on Friday.

Citing the Constituent Assembly debate on the issue, it said Hosabale's call resonates with the democratic principles championed by BR Ambedkar and the Constituent Assembly, which rejected a proposal to describe India as a "secular, federal, socialist Union of States" in 1948.

"The 42nd Amendment was a political manoeuvre, not reflection of the Constituent Assembly's deliberative process," said the article, published on the Organiser weekly. "The call is not about dismantling the Constitution but about restoring its original spirit, free from Congress's Emergency-era distortions".

The Congress however, alleged that the RSS has "never accepted" the Constitution and the move is a "deliberate assault on its soul". —*PTI*

> **The RSS has always opposed the core values of our Constitution. This is not a casual remark - it is part of a long-standing agenda to reshape India's democracy in their ideological image.... The original Preamble didn't include those words. But that's because it was already understood that India would be a secular and socially just democracy. It was only later -- when these values were being attacked, especially by the RSS and its affiliates -- that they were added clearly through the 42nd Amendment**
>
> —Siddaramaiah, Karnataka Chief Minister

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Tejashwi is the face for Bihar CM's post: Kanhaiya

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

There is no confusion or dispute in the 'Mahagathbandhan' over Tejashwi Yadav being the main face for the Bihar Chief Minister's post, Congress leader Kanhaiya Kumar said on Friday. He asserted that the CM will be from the RJD.

"There is no doubt it," he said. "Naturally, the RJD will contest on more seats and will win more seats. It will have the numbers and naturally, it will have a claim to the post of the Chief Minister, there is no doubt about this".

On the Election Commission asking for place of birth certificates starting with the Bihar polls, Kumar said the Congress has asked the poll panel to rectify the anomalies in the voters list.

"First, you were saying there is no error. Now you are starting this process from Bihar. So, you are accepting that there is a mistake," he said.

On Nitish Kumar's health, he alleged that Union Home Minister Amit Shah is an expert in finding "opportunities in disaster". See what he did in Maharashtra, he said. —*PTI*

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COMMENDABLE EFFORTS

State awards 53 on Kempegowda Jayanthi

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

A total of 53 individuals, including members of the BBMP Restructuring Committee, who gave the first draft of the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024 proposing a new governance structure for the City, have been awarded Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Award for 2025. Other notable awardees include tennis star Mahesh Bhupathi and playback singer Sangeetha Katti.

Apart from members of the BBMP Restructuring Committee, former chief secretary BS Patil, retired IAS officer Siddaiah, and V Ravichandar, former bureaucrats Jayakar Jerome and SR Umashankar were given awards.

The awards were presented at the BBMP head office by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar.

Tennis star Mahesh Bhupathi, singer Sangeetha Katti and civic activist RK Mishra **PHOTO: X**

CM Siddaramaiah, DyCM DK Shivakumar garland a statue of Kempegowda on his 516th birth anniversary in front of Vidhana Soudha on Friday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

The award ceremony marked by the 516th Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Jayanthi, marking the birth anniversary of the City founder.

Other awardees include BS Satish Kumar, Deputy Chief of Bureau, The Hindu, Karnataka, civic activists RK Mishra and Padmashree Balaram and advocate MS Shyamsundar, and cable operator VS Patrick Raju.

Speaking later, Shivakumar said that the ruling Congress government modelled itself after Kempegowda's ideals.

"We should not forget three Ks- Kempegowda the founder of Bengaluru, Kengel Hanumanthaiah who built the Vidhana Soudha and SM Krishna who built the Vikasa Soudha," he said.

He also said that the government was planning a new 60,000 seater stadium. —*Agencies*

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YSRCP to Centre: Help mango farmers in Andhra

TIRUPATI, 27 JUNE

YSRCP leader Maddila Gurumoorthy on Friday urged Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to rescue mango farmers in Andhra Pradesh, who are facing severe distress due to crashing prices and the widespread shutdown of mango processing units. In a letter to Chouhan, the MP from Tirupati, pointed out that over 12.35 lakh acres of land in AP are under mango cultivation in Andhra Pradesh, accounting for 16.5 percent of India's total mango cultivation area, yet production remains disproportionately low. "Farmers are being forced to sell Thothapuri (variety) mangoes at Rs 1 to Rs 4 per kg — far below the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rs 12," Gurumoorthy wrote in the letter, which was shared on YSRCP's 'X' handle.—*PTI*

Devotees flood Chamundi Hills on Ashadha Friday

MYSURU, 27 JUNE

The first Ashadha Friday saw over 2 lakh devotees at Chamundi Hills, offering special prayers at the Sri Chamundeshwari temple. The special poojas started at 3.30am, and the temple doors were opened for devotees at 5.30am. Hundreds of thousands of devotees took public transport starting from 3am from Lalithamahal helipad grounds on T Narasipur road to reach the hilltop while thousands chose to climb the 1001 steps in the wee hours to reach the pilgrimage site. The entry of all public vehicles was banned this year, too. —*Salar News*

Businessman robbed of ₹2 cr in MS Palya

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

A 33-year-old businessman was allegedly robbed of Rs 2 crore by a gang in MS Palya, police said on Friday. The incident occurred on Wednesday when Shree Harsha V was attempting to convert the cash into cryptocurrency at a commercial building, police officials said. Suddenly, a gang of six assailants barged into the premises, threatened him with knives, and fled with his money and four mobile phones after locking him and others inside the room, a senior police officer said. —*Agencies*

Siddaramaiah dismisses reports of bickering in Cong

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday dismissed reports of bickering in the ruling Congress in the State.

He said this while addressing the media during a programme organised to commemorate the 516th birth anniversary of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda at the Vidhana Soudha in the City

Siddaramaiah also asked people to ignore Cooperation Minister KN Rajanna's statement that there were many power centres in the Congress. Rajanna had also said that there would be "revolution in the government" after September.

The Chief Minister clarified that Rajanna only mentioned there may be developments, not that anything specific would happen.

"Where's internal bickering? All that Rajanna has said is that there are developments. He did not say that such and such things will happen. It would be better to ignore his statement," Siddaramaiah said.

> Where's internal bickering? All that Rajanna has said is that there are developments. He did not say that such and such things will happen. It would be better to ignore his statement, asked Siddaramaiah

"There is no internal dispute in party," he said on KN Rajanna's remarks about possible political changes.

Similarly, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar dismissed Rajanna's statements.

"I am not aware of this matter. I will speak to him and let you know afterwards. In any case, you should ask him directly."

Minister MB Patil rubbished the claims, asserting the structure and discipline of the party. "The Congress is very disciplined; it runs on principles. There is going to be no revolution in the party," he said in Vijayapura on Friday. —*Agencies*

HC notice to State govt over Cauvery Aarti row

Petitioners argue the ritual violates the law

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Karnataka High Court on Friday issued a notice to the State government in response to a petition challenging the proposed Cauvery Aarti near the Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) reservoir, raising alarms over potential ecological and safety hazards.

A division bench led by Acting Chief Justice V Kameswar Rao and Justice CM Joshi passed the order after considering preliminary arguments from Advocate Rajanna R, who appeared on behalf of the petitioner Sunanda Jayaram.

The bench has directed all respondents to submit their replies within two weeks.

The petition contests the Water Resources Department's

plan to hold a Cauvery Aarti event, modelled on the Ganga Aarti, for which the state has reportedly approved a budget of Rs 92.30 crore.

The government aims to launch the event by Dasara and is planning a facility to accommodate around 10,000 people to witness the aarti. The funds are intended for building infrastructure to accommodate large public gatherings, including a stadium, parking zones, and other amenities.

According to the petitioner, the decision was taken without adequate assessment of its broader implications. The petition argues that the administrative sanction violates provisions under the Dam Safety Act, 2021, and seeks to have it annulled.

The proposed construction activity and influx of visitors could jeopardise the safety of the KRS dam, pollute the river, and disrupt the surrounding ecosystem. There are also concerns that the initiative could negatively affect agricultural practices in the wider Cauvery basin.

An interim stay on the project's implementation has also been requested. —*PTI*

HC relief to Bommai in Waqf remark cases

Says there was nothing concrete in charges

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

The Karnataka High Court on Friday set aside two criminal cases filed against BJP leader and former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai, which alleged he made objectionable remarks during a protest rally criticising the Waqf Board and the State government over alleged encroachment on farmers' and temples' properties.

Justice SR Krishna Kumar, delivering the order, allowed Bommai's plea to quash the proceedings that had been initiated by Shiggaon police under Section 196(1)(a) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which pertains to promoting enmity between different groups on grounds such as religion or race.

Senior advocate Prabhuling K Navadgi, representing Bommai, contended that the complaints lacked the essential elements required to constitute an offence under Section 196(1)(a). In response, Additional Special Public Prosecutor BN Jagadeesha argued that the video evidence of the protest prima facie suggested Bommai had committed the offence.

After reviewing the complaint and referring to relevant Supreme Court and High Court precedents, the judge observed that the allegations were too vague and lacked substance. It noted that aside from Bommai's statement -- "wherever a stone is thrown, Waqf property is found" -- the complaint did not contain specific elements that could sustain charges under the said provision.

Declaring that pursuing the case would amount to an abuse of legal process, the court quashed the proceedings against Bommai. The judge clarified that the relief is limited to Bommai and does not extend to other accused named in the FIR. —*PTI*

Poisoned cow carcass may have led to deaths of 5 tigers: Khandre

MYSURU, 27 JUNE

The discovery of a seemingly decomposed carcass of a cow in Hugyam forest range in Mahadeshwara Hills on Friday has strengthened suspicion that the death of a tigress and her four cubs in the area could be caused by poisoning, officials said. The carcasses were found on Thursday.

It is suspected that someone intentionally poisoned the cow, and the tigress and its cubs died after eating the carcass.

"Either the cow was poisoned before being left in the forest, or its owner, after spotting the dead cow, poisoned the carcass, which the tigress and her cubs ate and died," the officer said.

Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre also supported this theory. He said someone might have poisoned the cow, which led to the death of the big cats. "Our government has taken the matter very seriously, and we will investigate it from all angles. We will not spare those behind it," said Khandre.

Confirming the suspicions, Chamarajanagar Chief Conservator of Forests T Heeralal said on Friday that his department has initiated an investigation.

—*Salar News with agencies*

> **The awareness that 'the survival of the human race depends on the protection of wildlife' needs to spread further. The government must initiate a widespread awareness campaign, emphasising that every wild animal is a friend of human society and a national treasuree**
>
> —Vijayendra, State BJP President

DESIGN CHANGE

Home Minister G Parameshwara, along with DGP&IGP MA Saleem, examines a display of police caps from different states in Bengaluru on Friday. A change in the design of caps has been proposed for head constables of police and constables in the State police department **PHOTO: SALAR**

Bank manager, among 3 held for ₹53 cr heist

VIJAYAPURA, 27 JUNE

Three people, including a bank manager, have been arrested in connection with the alleged robbery of gold and cash worth over Rs 53.26 crore from Canara Bank's Managuli branch, police said on Friday.

The accused have been identified as Vijayakumar Miriyala, 41, the bank manager, and his accomplices—Chandrashekhar Nerella, 38, and Sunil Narasimhalu Moka, 40, police added.

The robbery took place at Canara Bank's Managuli branch in Basavanabagewadi taluk of Vijayapura district on 25 May, where Miriyala had previously served as branch manager.

Vijayapura Superintendent of Police Lakshman Nimbargi said 58.97 kg of gold ornaments worth Rs 53.26 crore and Rs 5.2 lakh in cash were stolen from the bank locker.

According to police, the accused had systematically conspired to rob the bank. They had planned the heist in February this year but waited until Miriyala was transferred from the Managuli branch to avoid suspicion. Police seized two cars used in the crime, along with 10.5kg of gold. —*Agencies*

AICC Secretary Mansoor Khan, along with Kerala Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan and senior leaders Ramesh Chennithala, KC Venugopal, Deepa Das Munshi, Sunny Joseph at Congress's Political Affairs Committee (PAC) meeting in Indira Bhawan, the KPCC HQ, in Thiruvananthapuram, on Friday. The deliberations focused on party strengthening and strategic planning **PHOTO: SALAR**

Kempegowda was born Vokkaliga, became a Vishwamanava: DKS

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar lauded City founder Kempegowda as a "Vishwamanava".

Speaking at an event organised to celebrate 516th birth anniversary of Kempegowda, he said, "Kempegowda was born a Vokkaliga but he lived a life of a 'Vishwamanava'. He has left an indelible mark on our society." He also laid the foundation stone for Kempegowda Bhavana and

awarded Kempegowda awards.

"Bengaluru is making waves around the world, but we should not forget that Kempegowda was the one who laid the foundation for the modern Bengaluru. He spread the message of secularism by giving opportunities to all sections of the society."

"I would like to send out a message to our community. Nobody seeks to be born in a particular community. Dharma must be part of politics but politics has no place in dharma. Kempegowda belongs to all communities, he is an asset of the society."

Shivakumar said the government was planning a new stadium. —*Salar News*

'BEING A GOVT TEACHER IS NOT EASY'

30 yrs of service honoured: BBMP lecturer wins Kempegowda Award

AMINA AFAQ
BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

After three decades of service in education, L Sameena Banu, a 59-year-old Urdu lecturer at BBMP PU College for Girls, Cleveland Town, has been honoured with the Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Award for Best Teacher of the Year.

Her journey was far from easy. Coming from a conservative Muslim family, Sameena aspired to become a lawyer. But when her mother became ill, she set her dreams aside to fulfil her mother's wish, for her to become a teacher.

"It was the best decision of my life. Whatever I am today is because of my parents and my husband who stood by me," Banu said.

Despite financial struggles and societal pressure, she pursued higher education, completing her BA in Economics and Urdu, an MA in Urdu, and a BeD, thanks to her mother's unwavering support.

For Banu, teaching has never been just a job. Over her 30-year career, she has supported economically weaker students, helping them gain admission into BBMP institutions and personally covering their fees when needed. "My main aim is to uplift the economically weaker sections and to serve people and get as many students education as possible," she told **Salar News**.

In one case, she even helped pay off a debt owed by the parents of a student who was at risk of dropping out.

She believes that BBMP schools and colleges are unfairly overlooked. "Because they are government-run, people frown upon them, forgetting they are among the most affordable, with fees rarely exceeding Rs 2,000," she said. "BBMP even offers Rs 35,000 to distinction holders in board exams and serves high-quality mid-day meals, but all these positives are often ignored."

This year, BBMP PU Colleges achieved a 70 per cent pass rate with 31 distinctions, which Banu sees as a testament to the quality of education provided. However, she notes that limited infrastructure, such as classrooms and seating, remains a challenge in accommodating the growing demand.

"Hard work, sincerity, punctuality and being duty-conscious are essential to achieving success," is her message to young teachers. "Being a government teacher is not easy. We teach from 9.30am to 3.30pm, and also undertake additional government duties like election and census work."

Her efforts have not gone unnoticed. "Sameena has a 100 per cent pass record in her subject, year after year," said Raghu M, the college principal. "She maintains discipline and oversees the smooth running of the college. Though classes begin at 9:30, she arrives by 8.30am to ensure everything is in place. Most of our admissions happen because of her reputation — parents ask for her by name."

Jazeela, a 2nd PUC Arts student, said, "She not only teaches but also advises us on making the right life decisions. Even though her subject is Urdu, she visits every class to check if we are facing any difficulties, in academics or in life."

"I'm proud of ma'am," said Afreen Ara, a 2nd PUC HEPS student. "She always guides us to make the right choices. She is the best teacher."

—*Salar News*

Sameena had aspired to become a lawyer, but when her mother became ill, she set her dreams aside to fulfil her mother's wish — becoming a teacher **PHOTO: SALAR**

PHOTO: X

Over 4,400 Indians evacuated from Iran, Israel: MEA

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

India has successfully evacuated over 4,400 citizens from Iran and Israel through 19 special flights under Operation Sindhu, which was initiated on 18 June in response to escalating conflict in region, according to Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). A recent flight from Armenia's Yerevan brought 173 Indians back to Delhi. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated that situation continues to be closely monitored, with decisions on further evacuations dependent on ground conditions. Thus far, 3,597 Indians have been evacuated from Iran, while 818 have been returned from Israel. Additionally, nationals from Nepal and Sri Lanka were included in these flights. India is poised to continue supporting its citizens and has approximately 10,000 in Iran & 40,000 in Israel. *—PTI*

Chhattisgarh's Bastar railway line nears completion

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

The establishment of a railway line in Naxal-affected Bastar area of Chhattisgarh is moving closer to realisation. A final location survey for the proposed 160km track, which will connect Chhattisgarh's Sukma, Dantewada, and Bijapur districts with Telangana, has nearly been completed. The Indian Railways is employing advanced LiDAR technology for the survey, monitored closely by Ministry of Home Affairs due to its significance for national security and regional development. With substantial backing from CM Vishnu Deo Sai's government, project is expected to enhance education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for local population. Officials are optimistic that this railway connection will foster self-reliance in remote areas of Bastar. *—PTI*

Soil and salt found mixed in free ration in UP

AMETHI, 27 JUNE

In a shocking incident in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh, food grains intended for the free ration scheme have been found mixed with soil and salt. District Magistrate Sanjay Chauhan reported these irregularities during a surprise inspection at a fair-price ration shop in Jalalpur Tiwari village. Following complaints from local residents, Chauhan has ordered investigation into the matter. He discovered contaminated grain bags and subsequently instructed officials to replace the tainted supplies. A high-level inquiry will be conducted under the Additional District Magistrate to ensure accountability. This issue of substandard ration has raised serious concerns among villagers. *—PTI*

Search on to locate 3 JeM terrorists in Jammu & Kashmir

JAMMU, 27 JUNE

A search operation by a joint team of security forces is underway to track down three Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorists in a forested area of J&K's Udhampur district on Friday. Haider alias Maulvi, a Pakistan-based JeM terrorist was killed in an encounter with security forces on 26 June, and three of his associates remain trapped in forested area of the Basantgarh belt. Backed by drones and sniffer dogs, operation resumed afresh this morning, with the cordon further strengthened with additional reinforcements to eliminate the remaining terrorists. The terrorists were confronted jointly by the Army and police in the remote Bihali area of Basantgarh on 26 June. They were found hiding near Karoor Nallah and were engaged by the joint search party I, resulting in an encounter. *—PTI*

Defence Minister meets Chinese counterpart

The Minister met for a discussion on solving of complex issues under a structured roadmap

QINGDAO/NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has proposed to his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun that India and China should solve the "complex issues" under a structured roadmap comprising steps to de-escalate tensions along the frontiers and rejuvenate the existing mechanism to demarcate the borders.

Singh and Dong held bilateral talks on the sidelines of a conclave of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in this Chinese port city on Thursday, with a focus on maintaining peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

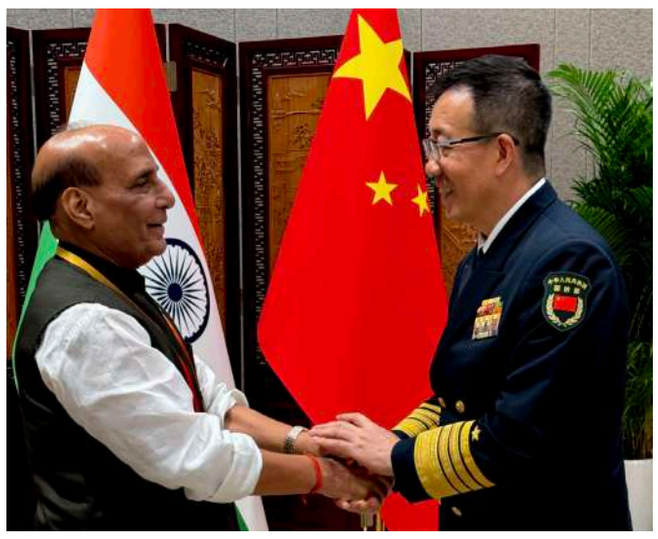
The Indian Defence Minister emphasised the need to create "good neighbourly conditions" to achieve the best mutual benefits and called for "taking action on the ground" to bridge the "trust deficit" resulting from the 2020 eastern Ladakh border standoff, according to an Indian readout.

Singh also briefed Dong on the Pahalgam terror attack targeting innocent civilians, and India's Operation Sindoor to dismantle the terrorist networks in Pakistan, the defence ministry said in New Delhi.

The two ministers agreed to continue consultations at various levels to achieve progress on issues related to disengagement, de-escalation, border management and eventual delimitation through existing mechanisms, it said.

The Singh-Dong meeting came amid efforts by both New Delhi and Beijing to reset their ties following an understanding last October to end the military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

In a social media post, Singh described the talks with Dong as "constructive".



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during a meeting with Chinese Defence Minister Admiral Dong Jun on the sidelines of the SCO Defence Ministers Meeting, in Qingdao, on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

The defence ministry said Singh and Dong held in-depth discussions on the need to maintain peace and tranquillity along the Indo-China border.

It said Singh acknowledged the work being undertaken by both sides to bring back a semblance of normalcy in the bilateral relations.

Singh also presented Dong a Madhubani painting called 'Tree of Life' that symbolised wisdom and vitality, officials said. *—PTI*

Coal imports from Russia at highest level in two years

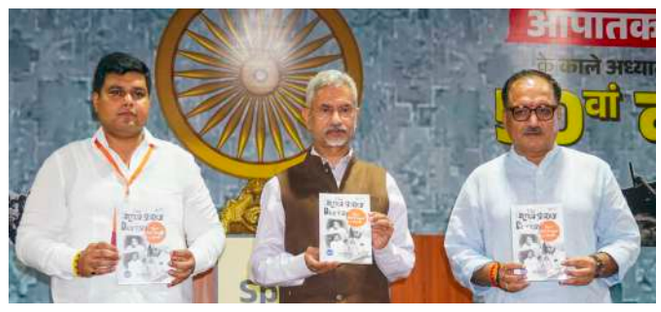
MOSCOW, 27 JUNE

India significantly increased its imports of Russian thermal coal in May 2025, reaching the highest level in two years, Russian business daily Kommersant reported, citing data from the Centre for Price Indices (CCI).

Deliveries rose by 52 per cent compared to April, totalling 1.3 million metric tonnes. This marks the first time since June 2023 that monthly imports from Russia have exceeded one million tonnes. Analysts attribute the rise to Russia's flexible pricing strategies and the higher quality of its coal.

India's total thermal coal imports in May rose by 10 per cent month-on-month to 17.4 million tonnes – the highest since June 2024, according to BigMint. Russia accounted for around 7.5 per cent of total imports.

Indonesia remained India's top supplier, by 16 per cent. Imports from South Africa held steady at 3.4 million tonnes, while US volumes surged by 43 per cent. *—PTI*



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar releases a publication at a mock Parliament session organised as part of the 50th anniversary observance of the Emergency, at NDMC Convention Hall, in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

Jaishankar slams Pakistan over SCO terror block

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday criticised Pakistan for blocking a reference to terrorism in the outcome document of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) defence ministers' meeting.

India refused to endorse the communique after Pakistan objected to the inclusion of the recent Pahalgam terror attack and broader concerns about cross-border terrorism.

Speaking at a separate BJP Yuva Morcha event marking 50 years since the Emergency, Jaishankar also blamed a 1970s agreement with Sri Lanka—signed during the Emergency—for the ongoing arrests of Indian fishermen. He said India gave up certain fishing rights without parliamentary debate, and Tamil Nadu continues to suffer the consequences.

Jaishankar denounced the Emergency as a dark chapter in Indian democracy, saying decisions were made to serve a single family rather than the country.

He took a swipe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, accusing him of carrying the Constitution "in his pocket but not in his heart". *—PTI*

AGAINST HINDI IMPOSITION

Raj, Uddhav to unite for Marathi's sake

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

Estranged cousins Uddhav and Raj Thackeray will unite for the cause of the Marathi language, as their parties will stage a joint protest against the "imposition" Hindi and the state government's three-language formula from Classes 1.

The protest on 5 July will bring Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray on the same platform.

Both leaders had asserted on Thursday that they would vehemently oppose the imposition of Hindi and the three-language formula while addressing separate press conferences at the same time.

Uddhav had announced to join a protest by civil society at Azad Maidan on 7 July, while Raj declared that he would take out a non-political march from Girgaum Chowpatty on 6 July, and would invite leaders of all political outfits, including the Shiv Sena (UBT).

Talking to reporters on Friday, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said Raj invited him to take part in the 6 July protest.

He said Uddhav immediately consented to be part of the protest but raised concerns that Ashadhi Ekadashi, which is celebrated across the state with much fanfare, falls on 6 July, and it would be inconvenient for everyone.

Raut said Sena chief suggested a joint protest by both parties on 5 July, and Raj also consented to it. *—PTI*

Jagan gets HC relief in convoy death case

AMRAVATI, 27 JUNE

Andhra Pradesh High Court on Friday restrained the police from taking coercive action against YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy until 1 July over the death of a party supporter during his recent roadshow.

The High Court gave the same relief to YSRCP Rajya Sabha member YV Subba Reddy and former ministers, Ambati Rambabu and V Rajini, who had been named in the case. On 18 June, Reddy visited Rentapalla village in Palnadu district to visit the family members of a party leader who had died by suicide a year ago due to alleged harassment by TDP leaders and police.

On his way, C Singayya, a supporter of YSRCP, allegedly fell under the wheels of a vehicle in which Reddy travelled and succumbed to his injuries. Police booked him and others, naming the vehicle driver.

The YSRCP supremo filed a petition in the High Court to quash the FIR against him. *—PTI*

Amid alliance buzz, TN Cong chief meets PMK leader

VILLUPURAM, 27 JUNE

TNCC chief K Selvaperunthagai called on PMK leader Ramadoss at his Thailapuram residence near Tindivanam on Friday, triggering speculation of realignment of political forces ahead of the Assembly election next year.

The Congress leader claimed he was not authorised to decide on alliances and that only DMK president and Chief Minister MK Stalin could decide on it.

"Why are you harping about alliance? I came here to call on Ramadoss and enquire about his health. We did not discuss politics," Selvaperunthagai told reporters emerging from the PMK founder-president's Thailapuram residence.

The DMK alliance, Selvaperunthagai asserted, was intact and it would form a government again in 2026.

"I didn't meet to talk about alliance. Its for our alliance leader Stalin to decide and announce. I came here to enquire about his health," the TNCC chief insisted.

Ramadoss *PHOTO: PTI*

He flayed the opposition AIADMK for not raising its voice against the BJP and Hindu Munnani for "insulting" former Chief Minister CN Annadurai at the Murugan devotees' conference in Tamil Nadu's Madurai.

Asked if Ramadoss was likely to switch sides to the DMK combine after having fought the 2024 Lok Sabha poll in alliance with the BJP, the TNCC chief replied, "He (Ramadoss) is a matured politician. He does not tilt towards anyone and is capable of taking firm decisions."

Ramadoss has been at loggerheads of late with his son Anbumani over leadership and management of the PMK. *—PTI*

Inbadurai questions on DMK–Cong ties

CHENNAI, 27 JUNE

AIADMK Rajya Sabha MP IS Inbadurai on Friday asked why the DMK continued ties with the Congress, though its late leader M Karunanidhi severely criticised the grand old party. Apparently annoyed over Chief Minister MK Stalin targeting the AIADMK for reviving electoral ties with the BJP recently, the AIADMK's advocates' wing secretary observed, "Karunanidhi was the one who severely criticised the party's electoral arrangement with the Congress, saying that 'a bad friendship will only end in disaster (kooda natpu kedai mudiyum)." In a post on the social media platform X, Inbadurai asked, "Why does the DMK have an alliance with such a Congress. Respond @mkstalin." *—PTI*

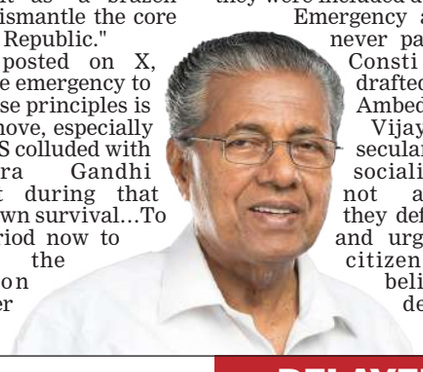
Kerala CM slams RSS stance on the Constitution's Preamble

T'PURAM, 27 JUNE

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Friday condemned the RSS call to review the words "socialist" and "secular" in the Indian Constitution's Preamble, describing it as "a brazen attempt to dismantle the core ideals of our Republic."

The CM posted on X, "Invoking the emergency to discredit these principles is a deceitful move, especially when the RSS colluded with the Indira Gandhi Government during that time for its own survival...To use that period now to undermine the Constitution reflects sheer hypocrisy and political opportunism."

The statement from Vijayan, a veteran CPM leader, came a day after RSS called for reviewing the words "socialist" and "secular" in Preamble of the Constitution, saying they were included dur ing the Emergency and were never part of the Consti tution drafted by BR Ambedkar.



- The statement from Vijayan, CPM leader, came a day after RSS called for reviewing the words "socialist" and "secular" in Preamble of the Constitution

Vijayan said secularism and socialism are not additions; they define India and urged every citizen who believes in democracy to raise their voice against the "communal agenda" of RSS.

RSS General Secretary Hosabale said on Thursday, "The Preamble of the Constitution which Baba Saheb Ambedkar made never had these words. During Emergency, when fundamental rights were suspended, Parliament did not work, judiciary became lame, and these words were added." *—PTI*

INDIA bloc opposes intensive revision of Bihar electoral rolls

PATNA, 27 JUNE

The opposition INDIA bloc in Bihar on Friday strongly opposed the Election Commission's (EC) proposed intensive revision of electoral rolls ahead of the state assembly elections.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, Congress' media and publicity department chief Pawan Khera and CPI(ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya affirmed this during a media interaction on Friday.

"We suspect that this exercise, which seeks documents from voters that few might possess, is aimed at disenfranchising a large number of people — especially those from deprived sections of society," alleged Tejashwi Yadav, a former Deputy CM, who is currently the leader of the opposition.

He alleged, "Once names are struck off the voters' list, the next step could be depriving these people of the benefits of social welfare schemes".

The young leader said that it was impossible for the EC to conduct such a mammoth exercise in just 25 days, as it had proposed. If it was possible, he would challenge the Centre to get the caste census done within two months. *—PTI*

DELAYED FOR OVER 5 HOURS

AI flight 'held back' at Mumbai airport

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

A Bangkok-bound Air India flight from the city was held back for over five hours on 25 June, after some hay was found stuck in one of the aircraft's wings, the airline has said.

This was immediately attended to, and the aircraft was subsequently cleared for operation, Air India said in a statement.

Tata Group-run airline did not share other key details such as the number of passengers and crew on board, the type of aircraft, the scheduled time of departure and for how long the passengers remained stranded at the Mumbai airport.

However, according to flight tracking website flightradar24.com, the flight AI 2354, operated by an Airbus A320Neo plane, was scheduled to depart from Mumbai at 7.45am. This was immediately attended to, and the aircraft was subsequently cleared for operation, the airline said, adding that the source of the hay could not be identified.

It also said as the flight crew came under the regulatory flight duty time limitations, the flight could not depart immediately.

The flight departed as soon as a fresh set of flight crew reported, the airline added.

The incident came days after the DGCA detected multiple violations related to airlines, airports, aircraft maintenance works, and repeated defects in multiple cases during its surveillance at major airports, an exercise carried out in less than two weeks after the 12 June Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad. *—PTI*

Shinde to build Rs 11 cr statue for mentor Dighe

THANE, 27 JUNE

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who also heads the Shiv Sena, has announced that a 42-metre-tall statue of his mentor Anand Dighe would be installed in Thane city.

Eknath Shinde *PHOTO: PTI*

He made the announcement on Thursday during "bhoomi pujan" (ground breaking) ceremony for the renovation of the clock tower at Shivaji Maidan, where the statue will come up.

Shinde said the renovated premises would not just feature the massive statue but also various citizen-centric amenities. A budget of Rs 11 crore has already been approved for the work, Shinde said. "When it comes to Dighe Saheb, because of whose blessings I became the chief minister, there will never be any paucity of funds," he added.

- Dighe, a popular Shiv Sena leader from Thane region, died from a heart attack following an accident in August 2001.

Dighe, a popular Shiv Sena leader from Thane region, died from a heart attack following an accident in August 2001. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

42 elderly rescued from UP old-age home's basement

NOIDA, 27 JUNE

A police raid has led to the rescue of 42 elderly individuals from the Anand Niketan Vridha Seva Ashram in Uttar Pradesh's Noida. Officials reported appalling conditions where some elderly women were found tied up and many residents discovered in "basement-like" rooms without adequate clothing. Meenakshi Bharala, a member of the Uttar Pradesh State Women Commission, revealed the shocking state of the facility, which will be sealed. Three elderly residents will be relocated to a state-run old-age home, while the remaining individuals will be moved to other government-approved facilities. Bharala emphasised the critical need for action against such illegal establishments that fail to respect the dignity and rights of their residents. *—PTI*

Ailing M'rashtra woman abandoned in forest, 3 held

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

A grandson and two accomplices were arrested for allegedly abandoning his 70-year-old grandmother, a cancer patient, in a forested area near Mumbai's Aarey Colony. The woman was discovered near a garbage dump on 22 June and hospitalised. CCTV footage revealed that her grandson, Sagar Shevale, his brother-in-law Babasaheb Gaikwad and autorickshaw driver Sanjay Kadresham were responsible for leaving her there. They initially sought medical help at the Shatabdi Hospital. As she was not admitted, they left her in the forest. The trio has been charged under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act. The elderly woman was admitted at the Cooper Hospital. *—PTI*

ONGC caps gas leak in Assam after 16 days

SIVASAGAR, 27 JUNE

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri announced that the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has successfully capped a blowout at its well in Sivasagar district, Assam, after 16 days of gas leakage that began on 12 June. The operation was completed without any injuries or fires. Puri praised the crisis management team and international well control experts for their meticulous efforts in bringing the situation under control. The well was managed by a private firm on behalf of ONGC. Approximately 350 families in nearby areas were evacuated to ensure safety. The minister expressed gratitude towards Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and local officials for their steadfast support throughout the crisis. *—PTI*

Honeymoon murder accused retract confessions

MEGHALAYA, 27 JUNE

Two of the three accused in the Raja Raghuvanshi murder have retracted their earlier confessions. Akash Rajput and Anand Kurmi refusing to testify before a magistrate on Friday, remained silent. Superintendent of Police Herbert Pyniaid Khar==kongor stated, "We have ample material evidence against them," adding that police confessions are not admissible in court. Raja and his wife, Sonam, had gone missing on 23 May, with the former's body discovered on 2 June. Sonam had confessed to the murder, allegedly colluding with her lover Raj Kushwaha and other accused. Police are investigating other possible suspects related to Sonam's stay in Indore. Meanwhile, the victim's family continued to seek justice. *—PTI*

Effort on to trace missing people in Himachal floods

Five bodies recovered in Kangra project site, six missing

SHIMLA/ AMRAVATI/ KOLKATA/JAIPUR/ DELHI, 27 JUNE

Search and rescue operation by joint teams of national and state disaster response forces, police and home guards to look for six missing people following cloudbursts and flash floods in Himachal Pradesh resumed on Friday morning,

These people were feared to have been swept away following cloudbursts and flash floods in Himachal Pradesh's Kangra and Kullu districts on 25 June.

Five bodies were recovered from a hydro project site in Kangra, while the search for three missing people is on. The teams are also searching for three persons who went missing at Rehla Bihal in the Kullu.

The operation was suspended by 9:30pm as the weather was bad, topography tough and no mobile signals at the site.

Bereaved family members mourn after their family members were swept away in flash floods after cloudbursts on Wednesday, in Kullu district, Himachal Pradesh **PHOTO: PTI**

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds were forecast across North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema in Andhra Pradesh over the next five days.

The weather activity is expected to intensify from June 28 to July 1.

Heavy to very rainfall were forecast in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas, Purulia, East and West Bardhaman, Jhargram, Bankura, Hooghly Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar and Cooch Behar districts till 1 July.

Fishermen were advises not to venture into the sea along and off the West Bengal-Odisha coast from 29 June onwards.

Heavy rain was witnessed in parts of Rajasthan on Friday with Sajjangarh in Banswara recording the highest rainfall of 130 mm.

Several places received 10 to 90 mm of rainfall during this period.

Thunderstorm accompanied by rain is expected in Dekhi on Friday, with the minimum temperature and maximum temperatures recorded at 29 degrees Celsius and 37 degrees Celsius respectively. *– PTI*

Devotees pull the chariots of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra in Digha in West Bengal on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Bengal's Jagannath temple takes out 1st Rath Yatra

DIGHA/AHMEDABAD, 27 JUNE

With Idols of Lord Jagannath and his two siblings inside their chariots, the new temple in West Bengal's Digha town is holding its first Rath Yatra on Friday.

All other preparations are done, and the administration is ready to conduct the event smoothly, an official said.

"The idols of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra were placed in their chariots kept near the main temple gate as the sibling deities were decked up for their annual sojourn to their aunt's place," said ISKCON Vice President Radharanan Das.

With visitors thronging the seaside town since the opening of the Jagannath temple in April, the hospitality business in this coastal town has boomed, an official said on Friday.

Around 90 per cent of the boarders are coming for two-day stays to visit the town and worship Lord Jagannath in the new temple, said Digha Hoteliers Association joint secretary Bipradas Chatterjee.

"The room occupancy in all hotels has increased by 20 per cent on average. Most of the visitors now arrive in Digha for a short stay, and it is too early to say if this surge in occupancy will sustain in the long run or not," he added.

—PTI

AGITATED ELEPHANT INJURES 1 IN GUJARAT RATH YATRA

AHMEDABAD, JUNE 27

One person was injured on Friday during the Rath Yatra procession in Ahmedabad, when a male elephant, agitated by excessive noise, broke a barricade and rushed into a narrow lane, officials said.

The mahouts on two other elephants followed the jumbo and controlled it, ensuring that the procession proceeded smoothly on its designated route, said RK Sahu, superintendent of Kankaria Zoo in the city.

"One bystander was injured after an elephant got disturbed and entered a narrow lane in the Khadia area. The injured person has been shifted to a hospital," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Control Room) Komal Vyas.

The 148th Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath began in Ahmedabad on Friday morning, with thousands of devotees joining the annual event.

The procession usually has 17 elephants, 100 trucks, and 30 akhadas. *—PTI*

The agitated elephant duirng the Rath Yatra in Gujarat **PHOTO: X**

Police dispersing protestors in Uttar Pradesh's Etawah **PHOTO: PTI**

UP tonsuring row: Tension in Etawah, 20 detained

ETAWAH/LUCKNOW, 27 JUNE

Days after the alleged caste-based tonsuring of a Bhagwat Katha preacher and his aide in Etawah's Dandarpur village, tensions escalated on 26 June as members of Yadav groups staged protests demanding the arrest of all accused and withdrawal of the case registered against the victims.

Videos showed unidentified persons pelting police personnel with stones even as the latter brandished firearms in the air to warn the protesters.

UP Minister Jaiveer Singh accused Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav of giving the tonsuring incident a "casteist spin" and blamed him for stoking the violence.

While the police managed to disperse most of the protestors on the Agra-Kanpur highway, a few tried to enter Dandarpur forcibly.

19 individuals were detained and 13 vehicles seized in connection to the incident.

Members from Yadav groups gheraoed the Bakewar Police Station in protest against alleged police action against the victims and demand the arrest of the accused.

When the police resorted to lathi-charge, the crowd reportedly threw stones at police personnel.

On the night of 22 June Bhagwat Katha preachers, Mukut Mani Yadav and his aide Sant Singh Yadav, were allegedly tonsured and humiliated by upper-caste men for belonging to the Yadav caste.

A video showed the accused saying, "You are getting punished for coming to the village of Brahmins."

"My head was shaved, and they sprinkled urine on me, saying it was to purify me," said Sant Singh.

The accused, Ashish Tiwari, Uttam Kumar Awasthi, Nikki Awasthi and Manu Dubey were arrested and booked. *—PTI*

Hindus can tell Katha: scholars

VARANASI, 27 JUNE

Condemning the recent assault on two Bhagwat Katha preachers by upper-caste men in Dandarpur village in Uttar Pradesh's Etawah, the Kashi Vidvat Parishad, a council of Sanskrit scholars, condemned the assault, affirming that in Sanatan Dharma the right to narrate religious stories is not restricted by caste. The Parishad called for an impartial probe. *—PTI*

UP accused gets Rs 5 lakh for delay in release

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Following a Supreme Court rebuke, the Uttar Pradesh government has paid Rs 5 lakh compensation to a man whose release from prison was delayed by 28 days despite being granted bail. The man, booked under the state's anti-conversion law received bail on 29 April, but was released from Ghaziabad jail only on 24 June. The delay stemmed from a technical omission in the trial court's release order, which lacked a specific sub-section of the 2021 anti-conversion Act. The top court called the detention a violation of liberty over a "trivial non-issue" and ordered compensation. The Court has directed an inquiry into the delay. *—PTI*

CRY FOR JUSTICE

Student gangraped in WB, TMC functionary, 2 held

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

The police arrested a contractual staffer, who was a TMC students' wing functionary, and two students for raping a 24-year-old student at a law college in Kolkata this week.

The three accused have been identified as Manojit Mishra, 31, Zaib Ahmed, 19 and Pramit Mukherjee, 20.

Mishra, the prime accused, was a former student of the law college and was employed in the institution as a contractual staffer. Though he was a TMC student leader, the party said he was no longer its member. The two other accused are students in the law college.

The incident occurred when the victim had gone to the students' union room around 4 pm on 25 June. The accused allegedly locked her inside another room and sexually assaulted her. They later threatened her not to tell anyone about the incident. However, after she narrated the incident to her family, she filed a complaint.

While Mishra and Ahmed were arrested on 26 June, and Mukherjee was arrested on Friday. Police have seized the phones of all three accused.

A preliminary medical examination of the victim has been conducted. The statements of witnesses have been recorded. The scene of the alleged crime has been secured, pending forensic examination.

The three accused were produced before a court, which remanded them to four-day police custody. *—PTI*

Accused in the gangrape of a student in South Calcutta Law College being taken to court on Friday **PHOTO: ANI**

VIOLATION OF GI RIGHTS

Artisans oppose Prada's Rs 1 lakh Kolhapuris

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

Artisans from Maharashtra have cried foul after footwear similar to famous Kolhapuri Chappals featured in Italian luxury fashion brand Prada's spring/summer collection for men, alleging violation of geographical identification (GI) rights.

BJP Rajya Sabha MP Dhananjay Mahadik on 26 May led a delegation of artisans, who craft this traditional footwear, originating in Kolhapur, to meet Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. They presented a letter urging him to look into the violation, raise the issue with the Centre and orm a protective mechanism of GI-tagged crafts.

Mahadik said the patent and design of chappals being promoted by Prada were Kolhapuri and were being sold at Rs 1.7 lakh to Rs 2.10 lakh per pair.

Prada has come up with a 'new' set of footwear collections which instantly reminds one of the Kolhapuri chappals that Indians have been using for ages **PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/@PRADA**

Artisans would get revenue and recognition if Prada accords the Kolhapuri identity to their product. The artisans here could manufacture them on Prada's orders, he said.

A public interest litigation will be filed in the high court, and the matter will be discussed with Union Minister Piyush Goyal.

On 23 June Prada reportedly presented its men's Spring/Summer 2026 collection in Milan, prominently featuring sandals that resembled Kolhapuri Chappals, which were awarded a GI tag by the Union government in 2019.

- Asked Mahadik said the patent and design of chappals being promoted by Prada were Kolhapuri and were being sold at Rs 1.7 lakh to Rs 2.10 lakh per pair.

Neither was the source community acknowleged nor any revenue went to the actual artisans of Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara and Solapur districts.

Dating back to the 12th century, Kolhapur chappals are handcrafted open-toe sandals with braided leather design. Prada removed pictures of the sandals from its website following criticism. *—PTI*

Woman wants dead son's semen, HC hears case

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

The Bombay High Court, in an interim order, has directed a city-based fertility centre to preserve the frozen semen of a deceased unmarried man pending hearing of a petition by his mother who wants to use the fluid to continue the family line.

The woman moved the HC after the fertility centre refused to release the frozen semen to her as the man, in his consent forms, had sought for the sperm carrying fluid to be discarded post-death. The man had chosen to freeze his semen when he was undergoing chemotherapy, a cancer treatment.

A bench on 25 June noted that if the frozen semen of the deceased man is discarded pending hearing of the plea, then it would become infructuous. The court posted the petition for further hearing on July 30.

- The court noted that if the deceased man's frozen semen is discarded pending hearing of the plea, then it would become infructuous.

The court in an interim order directed the fertility centre to store the deceased's frozen sample during pendency of the petiti. *—PTI*

EVE OF MUHARRAM

Shiite worshippers gather at the shrine of Imam Moussa al-Kadhim on the eve of Muharram in Baghdad, Iraq. Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar and is considered one of the four sacred months of the year
PHOTO: PTI

Focus on Asia's oil imports amid Israel-Iran tensions

Asia's dependence on Middle East oil and gas — and its relatively slow shift to clean energy — make it vulnerable to disruptions in shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic weakness highlighted by the war between Israel and Iran.

Iran sits on the strait, which handles about 20 per cent of shipments of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas, or LNG. Four countries — China, India, Japan and South Korea — account for 75 per cent of those imports.

Japan and South Korea face the highest risk, according to analysis by the research group Zero Carbon Analytics, followed by India and China. All have been slow to scale up use of renewable energy.

In 2023, renewables made up just 9 per cent of South Korea's power mix — well below the 33 per cent average among other members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD. In the same year, Japan relied more heavily on fossil fuels than any other country in the Group of Seven, or G7.

A truce in the 12-day Israel-Iran war appeared to be holding, reducing the potential for trouble for now. But experts say the only way to counter lingering uncertainty is to scale back reliance on imported fossil fuels and accelerate Asia's shift to clean, domestic energy sources.

China and India are the biggest buyers of oil and LNG passing through the potential chokepoint at the Strait of Hormuz, but Japan and South Korea are more vulnerable.

Japan depends on imported fossil fuels for 87 per cent of its total energy use and South Korea imports 81 per cent. China relies on only 20 per cent and India 35 per cent, Ember, an independent global energy think tank that promotes clean energy said.

Three-quarters of Japan's oil imports and more than 70 per cent of South Korea's oil imports — along with a fifth of its LNG — pass through the strait, said Sam Reynolds of the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. Both countries have focused more on diversifying fossil fuel sources than on shifting to clean energy.

Iran sits on the strait, which handles about 20 per cent of shipments of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas, or LNG
PHOTO: FREEPIK

Japan still plans to get 30-40 per cent of its energy from fossil fuels by 2040. To meet their 2050 targets for net-zero carbon emissions, both countries must dramatically ramp up use of solar & wind power.

Japan's energy policies are inconsistent. It still subsidizes gasoline and diesel, aims to increase its LNG imports and supports oil and gas projects overseas. Offshore wind is hampered by regulatory barriers. Japan has climate goals, but hasn't set firm deadlines for cutting power industry emissions.

South Korea's low electricity rates hinder the profitability of solar and wind projects, discouraging investment, a "key factor" limiting renewables, said Kwanghee Yeom of Agora Energiewende.

China and India have moved to shield themselves from shocks from changing global energy prices or trade disruptions.

China led global growth in wind and solar in 2024, with generating capacity rising 45 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively. It has also boosted domestic gas output even as its reserves have dwindled.

By making more electricity at home from clean sources and producing more gas domestically, China has managed to reduce imports of LNG, though it still is the world's largest oil importer, with about half of the more than 11 million barrels per day that it brings in coming from the Middle East. Russia and Malaysia are other major suppliers.

India relies heavily on coal and aims to boost coal production by around 42 per cent from now to 2030. But its use of renewables is growing faster, with 30 additional gigawatts of clean power coming online last year, enough to power nearly 18 million Indian homes.

A blockade of the Strait of Hormuz could affect other Asian countries, and building up their renewable power generating capacity will be a "crucial hedge" against the volatility intrinsic to importing oil and gas, said Reynolds of the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis

Southeast Asia has become a net oil importer as demand in Malaysia and Indonesia has outstripped supplies, according to the ASEAN Centre for Energy in Jakarta, Indonesia. The 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations still exports more LNG than it imports due to production by Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Myanmar.

Use of renewable energy is not keeping up with rising demand and production of oil and gas is faltering as older fields run dry.

The International Energy Agency has warned that ASEAN's oil import costs could rise from USD 130 billion in 2024 to over USD 200 billion by 2050 if stronger clean energy policies are not enacted. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

Protests can't stop Bezos' dream Venice wedding

The Italian city of Venice was making waves Friday with the most anticipated wedding of 2025 — that of billionaire Jeff Bezos and his fiancée Lauren Sánchez. The sky itself is no limit for this couple who has travelled into space, and expectations are about as high.

One of the world's most-enchanting cities as backdrop? Check.

Star-studded guestlist and tabloid buzz? Of course.

Local flavour? You bet.

Beyond that, the team of the world's fourth-richest man has kept details under wraps. Still, whispers point to events spread across the lagoon city, adding complexity to what would have been a massive logistical undertaking even on dry land.

On Thursday, dozens of private jets touched down at Venice's airport as yachts pulled into the city's famed waterways.

Aboard were athletes, celebrities, influencers and business leaders, converging to revel in extravagance that is as much a testament to the couple's love as to their extraordinary wealth.

The heady hoopla recalled the 2014 wedding in Venice of actor George Clooney to human rights lawyer Amal Alamuddin, when adoring crowds lined the canals and hundreds of well-wishers gathered outside City Hall.

Not so for these nuptials, which have become a lightning rod for protests.

Still, any desire to dampen the prevailing fever pitch has yet to materialise. Instead, the glitterati were set to party, and the paparazzi jostling for glimpses of the gilded gala.

Whatever happens, it will be a wedding for the ages.

Venice is famed for its network of canals, where gondoliers croon for lovestruck couples and even ambulances are aquatic.

But water transport of everything from bouquets to guests makes Venice among the world's most challenging cities for a party, according to Jack Ezon, CEO of luxury travel advisory and event planner Embark Beyond.

It at least triples the cost versus staging = same soiree in Rome or Florence, he said.

Veneto Gov Luca Zaia was first to give an estimated tally for the Bezos/Sánchez bash: He told reporters this week the most recent total he saw was between 40 and 48 million euros.

It's an eye-popping, jaw-dropping figure that's over 1,000 times the USD 36,000 average cost of American couples' weddings in 2025, according to wedding planning website Zola's annual report.

Bezos' team has been tight-lipped about where these millions are going. When the youngest son of Asia's richest man married last July, performances by pop stars Rihanna and Justin Bieber pushed up price tag.

"How do you spend USD 40 million on a three- or four-day event?" Ezon said. "You could bring headliners, A-list performers, great DJs from anywhere in the world. You could spend USD 2 million on an incredible glass tent that's only there for 10 hours, but it takes a month to build," or expand the celebration to local landmarks.

There's no sign Sánchez and Bezos, the former CEO of Amazon, intend to take over any of Venice's tourist-thronged hotspots. Still, intense hand-wringing about the prospect prompted their wedding coordinator, Lanza & Baucina, to issue a rare statement calling those rumours false.

Local media have reported the couple will hold a ceremony Friday on San Giorgio island, across the lagoon basin from St Mark's Square.

Associated Press journalists circling the island Thursday saw workers assembling tents and private security personnel stationed at every pier, including a newly built one.

Media have also reported a reception Saturday in the Arsenale, a former navy base best known as a primary venue for the Venice Bienalle. There are some who say these two should not be wed in this city.

They characterize the wedding as a decadent display of wealth in a world with growing inequality, and argue it's a shining example of tourism taking precedence over residents' needs, particularly affordable housing and essential services. Venice is also one of the cities most vulnerable to rising sea levels from climate change.

About a dozen Venetian organisations — including housing advocates, anti-cruise ship campaigners and university groups — are protesting under the banner "No Space for Bezos," a play on words referring to his space exploration company Blue Origin and the bride's recent space flight.

Greenpeace unfurled a banner in St Mark's Square denouncing Bezos for paying insufficient taxes. Activists floated a bald-headed Bezos-inspired mannequin down a Venice canal atop an Amazon delivery box, its hands clenching fake cash.

Authorities — from Venice's mayor to the nation's tourism minister — have dismissed the outcry, saying it ignores the visibility and economic boost the wedding brings.

As Amazon's CEO, Bezos usually avoided limelight, delegating announcements and business updates to his executives.

In 2019, he announced he was divorcing his first wife, MacKenzie Scott, just before the National Enquirer published a story about an affair with Sánchez, a former TV news anchor. Sánchez filed for divorce the day after Bezos' divorce was finalised. *—PTI*

The Italian city of Venice was making waves Friday with the most anticipated wedding of 2025 — that of billionaire Jeff Bezos and his fiancée Lauren Sánchez
PHOTO: FREEPIK

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Do all Iranians hate their government, and also America?

From 2015 to 2018, I spent 15 months doing research work in Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city. As an anthropologist, I was interested in everyday life in Iran outside the capital Tehran. I was also interested in understanding whether the ambitions of the 1979 Revolution lived on among "ordinary" Iranians, not just political elites.

I first lived on a university campus, where I learned Persian, and later with Iranian families. I conducted hundreds of interviews with people who had a broad spectrum of political, social and religious views. They included opponents of the Islamic Republic, supporters, and many who were in between.

What these interviews revealed to me was both the diversity of opinion and experience in Iran, and the difficulty of making uniform statements about what Iranians believe.

When Israel's strikes on Iran began on 13 June, killing many top military commanders, many news outlets – both international and those run by the Iranian diaspora – featured images of Iranians cheering the deaths of these hated regime figures.

Friends from my fieldwork also pointed to these celebrations, while not always agreeing with them. Many feared the impact of a larger conflict between Iran and Israel.

Trying to put these sentiments in context, many analysts have pointed to a 2019 survey by the GAMAAN Institute, an independent organisation based in the Netherlands that tracks Iranian public opinion.

This survey showed 79 per cent of Iranians living in the country would vote against the Islamic Republic if a free referendum were held on its rule.

The news reporting on Iran has encouraged a tendency to see the Iranian state as homogeneous, highly ideological and radically separate from the population.

But where do we draw the line between the state and the people? There is no easy answer to this.

When I lived in Iran, many of the people who took part in my research were state employees – teachers at state institutions, university lecturers, administrative workers. Many of them had strong and diverse views about the legacy of the revolution and the future of the country.

They sometimes pointed to state discourse they agreed with, for example Iran's right to national self-determination, free from foreign influence. They also disagreed with much, such as the slogans of "death to America".

Iranian women mourn during the funeral ceremony of an Iranian soldier killed in Israeli airstrike in Tehran
PHOTO: PTI

In a narrower sense, discussions about the "state" may refer more to organisations like the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Basij, the paramilitary force within the IRGC that has cracked down harshly on dissent in recent decades.

For a start, the IRGC relies on both ideologically selected supporters, as well as conscripts, to fill its ranks. They are also not always ideologically uniform, as the US-based anthropologist Narges Bajoghli, who worked with pro-state filmmakers in Tehran, has noted.

As part of my research, I also interviewed members of the Basij, which, unlike the IRGC proper, is a wholly volunteer organisation.

Even though ideological commitment was certainly an important factor for some of the Basij members I met, there were also pragmatic reasons to join. These included access to better jobs, scholarships and social mobility. Sometimes, factors overlapped.

This isn't to suggest there are not ideologically committed people in Iran. They clearly exist, and many are ready to use violence. Some of those who join these institutions for pragmatic reasons use violence, too.

In addition, Iran is an ethnically diverse country. It has a population of 92 million people, a bare majority of whom are Persians. Other minorities include Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Baloch, Turkmen and others.

It is also religiously diverse. While there is a sizeable, nominally Shi'a majority, there are also large Sunni communities and smaller communities of Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Baha'is and other religions.

Often overlooked, there are also important differences in class and social strata in Iran, too.

One of the things I noticed about state propaganda was that it flattened this diversity.

State propaganda made it seem like there was one voice in the country. Protests could be dismissed out of hand because they did not represent the "authentic" view of Iranians. Foreign agitators supported protests. Iranians supported the Islamic Republic.

Since leaving Iran, I have followed many voices of Iranians in the diaspora. Opposition groups are loud on social media, especially the monarchists who support Reza Pahlavi, the son of the deposed Shah.

In following these groups, I have noticed a similar tendency to speak as though they represent the voice of all Iranians. Iranians support the shah. Or Iranians support Maryam Rajavi, leader of a Paris-based opposition group.

Both within Iran, and in the diaspora, the regime, too, is sometimes held to be the imposition of a foreign conspiracy. This allows the Islamic Republic and the complex relations it has created to be dismissed out of hand. Once again, such a view flattens diversity.

Over the past few years, political identities and societal divisions seem to have become harder and clearer. This means there is an increasing perception among many Iranians of a gulf between the state and Iranian society.

I am not an Iranian, and I strongly believe it is up to Iranians to determine their own futures. I also do not aim to excuse the Islamic Republic – it is brutal and tyrannical. But its brutality should not let us shy away from asking complex questions.

If the regime did fall tomorrow, Iran's diversity means there is little unanimity of opinion as to what should come next. And if a more pluralist form of politics is to emerge, it must encompass the whole of Iran's diversity, without assuming a uniform position.

It, too, will have to wrestle with the difficult questions and sometimes ambivalent relations the Islamic Republic has created. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Clashes break out in Togo between protesters, cops

LOME, 27 JUNE

Clashes broke out between protesters and security forces in several parts of Togo's capital Lomé on Thursday, as President Faure Gnassingbé faced increasing pressure from critics over recent changes in the constitution that could effectively keep him in power indefinitely. A heavy police presence could be seen throughout the capital, where many businesses remained closed. Hundreds of protesters set up concrete block barricades in several neighbourhoods of Lomé, with some burning tires and throwing projectiles at security forces. Military was deployed as reinforcements in some areas. Police dispersed dozens of protesters with tear gas and arrested around 10 people in the Bè neighbourhood, a stronghold of the opposition. *—PTI*

Thailand bans cannabis sales sans prescription

BANGKOK, 27 JUNE

Thailand has enforced a ban on cannabis sales without a prescription, following its historic decriminalisation of the drug three years ago. The new regulation, signed by Health Minister Somsak Thepsutin, reclassifies cannabis buds as controlled herbs and imposes penalties including a potential one-year prison term or a 20,000-baht (USD 614) fine for violations. The Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine aims to ensure cannabis is used solely for medical purposes in response to public concerns regarding its accessibility, particularly to minors. Following the initial decriminalisation, cannabis shops flourished, boosting tourism and agriculture. The rise in addiction cases has prompted calls for regulation. *—PTI*

18 members of a family drown in flash floods in Pak

PESHAWAR, 27 JUNE

A tragic incident occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where at least 18 members of a family reportedly drowned in the Swat River due to flash floods caused by heavy rainfall. Rescue officials confirmed the recovery of four bodies and stated that an extensive search operation is underway, involving 80 personnel from Rescue 1122. The family was part of a tourist group known to have been visiting the scenic region when they became trapped in the rapidly rising waters. The Swat River, renowned for its beauty, has turned perilous in recent days as weather conditions worsen, prompting a response from local authorities to locate the remaining missing individuals. The search is continuing. *—PTI*

Six Americans held for shipping Bibles to North Korea

SEOUL, 27 JUNE

Six Americans have been detained in South Korea after attempting to send aid, including rice, US dollars, and Bibles, to North Korea by launching them from Gwanghwa Island. The police reported that the individuals intended for the items to float towards North Korean shores, violating safety regulations. Activists engaging in such actions have historically caused tensions between the two Koreas. The recent detentions coincide with efforts by the new liberal government, under President Lee Jae Myung, to curtail anti-North Korea campaigns while attempting to promote dialogue and safety along the border. Following a recent ruling by the Constitutional Court to decriminalise sending propaganda, the government is now enforcing stricter laws to manage potential fallout. *—PTI*

US offers Iran $30B, other sops for N-talks: Report

Tehran says talks with US are difficult after the bombings

DUBAI, 27 JUNE

The Trump administration has been exploring a range of proposals to bring Iran back to the negotiating table, including easing sanctions, releasing frozen funds, and facilitating a 30-billion-dollar investment in a civilian nuclear energy programme, CNN reported.

CNN cited sources saying that talks between Iran and US are ongoing, despite the increased hostilities. US has made several proposals to Iran, including a USD 20-30 billion investment in non-enrichment nuclear infrastructure for civilian energy, sanctions relief and access to $6 billion in Iranian assets currently frozen in foreign accounts CNN said, citing four sources.

One idea suggested involves rebuilding the Fordo nuclear site, recently struck by US bunker-buster bombs, into a non-enriching civilian facility, potentially funded by US-aligned Gulf nations. It remains unclear whether Iran would operate that site under the new proposal.

CNN said that key Middle East players are holding talks with both Iran and the US. However, there is no report about when any of these ideas will materialise. US President Donald Trump has said Iran and Washington would meet sometime next week.

Meanwhile, Iran's top diplomat said the possibility of new negotiations with the US has been "complicated" by the American attack on three of the sites, which he conceded caused "serious damage".

In an interview on Iranian state television broadcast late Thursday, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi left open the possibility that his country would again enter talks on its nuclear programme but suggested it would not be anytime soon.

"No agreement has been made for resuming the negotiations," he said. "No time has been set, no promise has been made, and we haven't even talked about restarting the talks."

The American decision to intervene militarily "made it more complicated and more difficult" for talks on Iran's nuclear program, Araghchi said. *—PTI*

ISRAEL BOMBS MOUNTAINS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

Israeli airstrikes targeted mountains overlooking a southern Lebanon city on Friday for underground assets of militant Hezbollah group on Friday. Another strike on an apartment building in the city of Nabatieh killed one woman and wounded 11, said Lebanon's state news agency. It was not immediately clear if that strike targeted anyone in the building. Since the 14-month Israel-Hezbollah war ended with a US-brokered ceasefire in November, Israel has carried out almost daily airstrikes on southern Lebanon. Friday's strikes were more intense than usual.

10 AID SEEKERS AMONG 62 KILLED IN ISRAELI STRIKES ON GAZA

Israeli forces reportedly killed at least 62 Palestinians on Friday, including ten individuals seeking aid in the beleaguered territory of Gaza, as confirmed by Gaza's Civil Defence Agency. The fatalities occurred amidst ongoing violence near aid distribution sites, largely managed by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which has drawn criticism from medical charity Doctors Without Borders for its alleged role in exacerbating the crisis. MSF's emergency coordinator denounced the aid effort as "slaughter masquerading as humanitarian aid," citing a dramatic increase in gunshot wounds among patients. Gaza's Civil Defence reported strikes across the region, including one that hit a school sheltering displaced persons. Access restrictions hinder independent verification of casualty figures.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Trump says US, China signed a trade agreement

BANGKOK, 27 JUNE

US and China have signed an agreement on trade, President Donald Trump said.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick told Bloomberg TV that the deal was signed earlier this week. Neither Lutnick nor Trump provided any details about the agreement. "We just signed with China the other day," Trump said late Thursday.

Lutnick said the deal was "signed and sealed" two days earlier.

It was unclear if the latest agreement was different from the one Trump announced two weeks earlier that he said would make it easier for American industries to obtain much-needed needed magnets and rare earth minerals. That pact cleared the way for the trade talks to continue, while the US agreed to stop trying to revoke visas of Chinese nationals on US college campuses.

China's Commerce Ministry said Friday that the two sides had "further confirmed the details of the framework". But its statement did not explicitly mention US access to rare earths, minerals used in high-tech applications that have been at the centre of the negotiations.

"China will approve the export applications of controlled items that meet the conditions in accordance with the law. The US will cancel a series of restrictive measures taken against China accordingly. It is hoped that the US and China will meet each other halfway," it said.

The agreement follows initial talks in Geneva in early May that led both sides to postpone massive tariff hikes that were threatening to freeze much trade between the two countries. Later talks in London set a framework for negotiations and the deal mentioned by Trump appeared to formalise that deal. *—PTI*

Guatemala, Honduras to accept US' asylum seekers

Guatemala and Honduras have signed agreements with the United States to potentially offer refuge to people from other countries who otherwise would seek asylum in the United States, US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said Thursday at the conclusion of her Central America trip. The agreements expand the Trump administration's efforts to provide the US government flexibility in returning migrants not only to their own countries, but also to third countries as it attempts to ramp up deportations. Noem described it as a way to offer asylum-seekers options other than coming to the United States.

Rubio, Sharif discuss Iran nukes, trade

WASHINGTON, 27 JUNE

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke to Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the developments taking place in the Middle East, the Spokesperson of the US Department of State said on Thursday.

According to the State Department Spokesperson Tammy Bruce, Rubio emphasised in his call to the Pakistani Prime Minister that "Iran can never develop or acquire a nuclear weapon".

Bruce said, "Rubio spoke with Sharif regarding events in the Middle East. Rubio emphasised Iran can never develop or acquire a nuclear weapon. The two leaders acknowledged the importance of working together to promote a durable peace between Israel and Iran and maintaining regional stability."

Both leaders "agreed to continue working together to strengthen Pakistan-US relations, particularly to increase trade", said a statement released by the Pakistan government. Commenting on the current situation in the Middle East, Sharif asserted that Pakistan will continue to play a constructive role in establishing peace in the Middle East. Sharif also praised US President Trump's "courageous and decisive leadership, which led to a ceasefire between Iran and Israel." He also thanked Rubio for the US role in the Indo-Pak ceasefire. *—ANI/PTI*

Firefighters work in a destroyed apartment building after a Russian attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Monday PHOTO: PTI

Russia, Ukraine trade more drone attacks

KYIV, 27 JUNE

Russian forces launched 363 Shahed and decoy drones as well as eight missiles at Ukraine overnight, the Ukrainian air force said on Friday, claiming that air defences stopped all but four of the drones and downed six cruise missiles.

Russia's Defence Ministry, meanwhile, said that 39 Ukrainian drones were downed in several regions overnight, including 19 over the Rostov region and 13 over the Volgograd region. Both regions lie east of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian air force said that 359 incoming drones were either intercepted or electronically jammed.

The Ukrainian attack forced three Russian airports to briefly suspend flights, officials said. The authorities also briefly closed the Crimean Bridge overnight as drones targeted Crimea.

Neither Russia nor Ukraine reported any major damage or casualties in the attacks. *—PTI*

TIBETANS TORTURED TO DEATH IN CHINESE JAILS: REPORT

DHARAMSHALA, 27 JUNE

The Human Rights Desk of the Department of Information and International Relations for the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) released a sobering report on 26 June, acknowledging the suffering of Tibetan political prisoners under Chinese authorities.

Titled "Torture Deaths of Tibetan Political Prisoners," the document details the tragedies faced by Tibetans, many of whom have died in custody or shortly after their release due to torture and inhumane treatment.

Since 2000, numerous Tibetans have lost their lives as a result of systematic torture, prolonged denial of medical care, and harsh prison conditions.

The report categorises individual cases under themes such as "Beaten to Death," "Denial of Medical Treatment," and "Died Post Prison Release," illustrating the severe brutality faced by inmates.

The CTA emphasised the need to remember those who died resisting the oppressive regime of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). They have urged the international community to advocate for human rights and hold China accountable for its transgressions against Tibetan identity and rights *—ANI*

Sudanese conflict spilling into CAR: UN

UNITED NATIONS, 27 JUNE

The conflict in Sudan is spilling across its southwestern border into Central African Republic (CAR), a country already battered by its own conflict with rebels, the United Nations peacekeeping Chief warned Thursday.

Undersecretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix told the UN Security Council that the attack that killed a UN peacekeeper near the country's border with Sudan last Friday was carried out by "armed Sudanese elements". His comments were the first identifying Sudanese armed fighters as responsible for the attack on the peacekeepers.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also said in a new report to the Security Council that vehicles suspected of belonging to the Rapid Support Forces — the key actors in Sudan's civil war — were sighted on several occasions in CAR.

Sudan plunged into civil war when rival generals heading the country's armed forces and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces started fighting each other in mid-April 2023. Since then, at least 24,000 people have died, about 13 million Sudanese have fled their homes, famine is setting in and cholera is sweeping across the country. Both sides have been accused of war crimes.

- Undersecretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix said the attack that killed a UN peacekeeper near the CAR border with Sudan was carried out by "armed Sudanese elements"

Meanwhile, CAR has been battling conflict since 2013, when predominantly Muslim rebels seized power and forced then President Francois Bozize from office. *—PTI*

China's Navy chief, top nuclear scientist expelled

BEIJING, 27 JUNE

China's Navy's Chief and a top nuclear scientist were expelled from the national legislature on Friday.

Vice Admiral Li Hanjun, Chief of Staff of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), and Liu Shipeng, Deputy Chief Engineer of China National Nuclear Corporation, have been expelled from the National People's Congress (NPC), the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

Li is the latest of a string of PLA generals and a handful of defence industry executives to have been implicated in a sweeping crackdown in the military, the Post reported.

State-run Xinhua news agency reported that the standing committee of the NPC also voted to remove top General Miao Hua from his position as a member of the Central Military Commission, the overall high command of the Chinese military, headed by President Xi Jinping.

Miao has been under probe for serious violations of discipline since November last year. He was dismissed from the NPC in April this year. *—PTI*

'TWITTER KILLER'

Japan executes man who dismembered 9

TOKYO, 27 JUNE

A man convicted of murder for killing and dismembering nine people in his apartment near Tokyo was executed on Friday, Japan's Justice Ministry said.

Takahiro Shiraishi, known as the "Twitter killer", was sentenced to death in 2020 for the killings in 2017 of the nine victims, most of whom had posted suicidal thoughts on social media. He was also convicted of sexually abusing female victims.

The execution was carried out as calls grow to abolish capital punishment in Japan since the acquittal of the world's longest-serving death-row inmate Iwao Hakamada last year. Shiraishi was hanged at the Tokyo Detention House with nothing disclosed until the execution was done.

Takahiro Shiraishi, known as the 'Twitter killer', was sentenced to death in 2020 for the killings in his apartment PHOTO: X

Police arrested him in 2017 after finding the bodies of eight females and one male in cold-storage cases in his apartment.

Investigators said Shiraishi approached the victims via Twitter, offering to assist them with their suicidal wishes. He killed the eight women, including teenagers, after raping them, and also killed a boyfriend of one of the women to silence him.

Japan's suicide rate ranks among the world's highest. Following a recent decline, the number has climbed back this year as people were hit by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. *—PTI*

Brazil to hold social media firms liable for user content

SAO PAULO, 27 JUNE

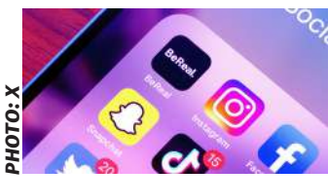


PHOTO: X

Brazil's Supreme Court agreed on Thursday on details of a decision to hold social media companies liable for what their users post, clearing the way for it go into effect within weeks.

The 8-3 vote in Brazil's top court orders tech giants like Google, Meta and TikTok to actively monitor content that involves hate speech, racism and incitation to violence and act to remove it.

The case has unsettled the relationship between the South American nation and the US government.

After Thursday's ruling is published by the court, people will be able to sue social media companies for hosting illegal content if they refuse to remove it after a victim brings it to their attention. The court didn't set out firm rules on what content is illegal, leaving it to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

The justices also agreed that social media companies will not be liable if they can show they took steps to remove illegal content in a timely fashion. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Gold plunges ₹930 to settle at ₹97,670 per 10g

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Gold prices plunged Rs 930 to Rs 97,670 per 10 in the national capital on Friday as traders rushed to selling amid easing off Middle East tensions and favourable reports about a trade deal between the US and China. According to the All India Sarafa Association, gold of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 98,600 per 10 on Thursday. On Friday, gold of 99.5 per cent purity declined by Rs 850 to Rs 97,200 per 10 (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at Rs 98,050 per 10 in the previous market session. In addition, silver prices slipped by Rs 100 to Rs 1,03,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Friday. Silver had ended at Rs 1,03,100 per kg on Thursday. Spot gold dropped by USD 43.45 or 1.31 per cent to USD 3,284.40 per ounce. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 24P to close at 85.48 against USD

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

The rupee rose 24 paise to close at 85.48 against the greenback on Friday on the back of strong FII inflows and firm domestic equity markets. The lower level of American currency index also favoured the Indian counterpart though an uptrend in crude oil prices capped its gain, forex traders said. Exchange data showed that foreign institutional investors purchased equities worth Rs 12,594.38 crore on a net basis on Thursday. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.50 against the dollar and traded in the range of 85.43-85.65 before settling at 85.48 (provisional), up 24 paise from its previous close. The local unit rose 36 paise to close at 85.72 against the US dollar on Thursday. *—PTI*

First lot of rose-scented litchi leaves for Qatar

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

In a boost to India's horticultural exports, the first consignment of 1 metric tonne of rose-scented litchi from Punjab's Pathankot has been flagged off to Doha, Qatar, on 23 June, said the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). The export was facilitated by the APEDA, which comes under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, in collaboration with the Department of Horticulture, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of Punjab. Officials said another 0.5 metric tonne of litchi was also exported to Dubai from Pathankot, marking a twin export achievement and reinforcing India's potential in global fresh fruit markets. This underscores the excellence of India's horticultural produce and highlights the country's growing agri-export capabilities. *—ANI*

ICAI bullish on widening scope for CAs in India

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Chartered accountants' apex body ICAI is bullish on the growing global capability centres in the country and expects their number to cross 5,000 in the next two years. Global Capability Centres (GCCs) will benefit the chartered accountants as they offer various services, ICAI President Charanjot Singh Nanda said on Friday. There are more than 1,700 GCCs in the country. At a briefing, Nanda said the number of GCCs is expected to cross 5,000 in the next two years and various upskilling initiatives have been put in place by the institute to help train the members in meeting the requirements of the GCCs. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has more than 4 lakh members. *—PTI*

Adani Group emerges as India's fastest growing brand

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Adani Group has emerged as the fastest-growing Indian brand, with its aggressive and integrated infrastructure focus driving growth, revealed the latest ranking of Most Valuable Indian Brands 2025 by Brand Finance.

The value of the brand Adani has risen from USD 3.55 billion in 2024 to USD 6.46 billion, marking a substantial gain of USD 2.91 billion — a testament to the Group's strategic clarity, resilience and commitment to sustainable growth. Effectively, the increase in value this year is greater than the entire brand valuation reported in 2023.

This growth has helped Adani climb to rank 13 from 16 last year, highlighting its strong momentum among India's top brands.

"Adani Group emerged as the fastest-growing Indian brand ranked this year, with its brand value up by 82 per cent. The group's growth is

attributed to aggressive and integrated infrastructure focus, the surge in green energy ambitions, and increased brand equity across key stakeholders," it said. The total brand value of the India 100 rankings now stands at USD 236.5 billion, according to the latest India 100 2025 report by Brand Finance.

With India's projected GDP growth pegged between 6 and 7 per cent for FY2025–2026, bolstered by sustained capex, strong domestic demand, and public-private partnerships, leading Indian brands are well-positioned to capitalise on opportunities, even as they navigate global volatility. Meanwhile, the Tata Group again topped the list as India's most valuable brand ranked.

"This historic milestone underscores India's expanding economic clout and the Tata Group's multi-sector dominance, with strategic investments in electronics, EVs, semiconductors, AI, and renewables," the Brand Finance report said. As the second most valuable Indian brand, Infosys continues to lead in the IT Services sector. *—PTI*

Stock markets continue winning streak on 4th day

Sensex gains by 300 pts while Nifty rises by 88.80 pts

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

Equity investors became richer by Rs 12.26 lakh crore as stock markets surged for the fourth day in a row on Friday amid de-escalation in geopolitical tensions and softening crude oil prices in international markets.

On Friday, the BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 303.03 points or 0.36 per cent to reclaim the 84,000 level and settled at 84,058.90. During the day, the Sensex jumped 333.48 points or 0.39 per cent to 84,089.35.

In the past four days, the benchmark has jumped 2,162.11 points or 2.64 per cent.

Tracking optimism in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms soared by Rs 12,26,717.72 crore to Rs 4,60,09,217.58 crore (USD 5.38 trillion) in four trading days.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

"Benchmark indices Nifty and Sensex closed on a firm footing in the green on Friday, capping off the week with robust gains. The rally was underpinned by de-escalation in geopolitical tensions post the Israel-Iran ceasefire and growing optimism surrounding a prospective US-India trade pact, which acted as key macro tailwinds. On a weekly basis, both frontline indices logged gains of 2 per cent," according to Bajaj Broking market commentary.

On Friday, as many as 2,251 stocks advanced, while 1,760 declined and 154 remained unchanged on the BSE.

From the Sensex pack, Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Power Grid, ICICI Bank, Reliance Industries, Bharat Electronics, Hindustan Unilever and Sun Pharma were among major gainers.

In contrast, Trent, Eternal, Tech Mahindra, Axis Bank and Titan were among the laggards.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.54 per cent, and the midcap index went up by 0.38 per cent. *— PTI*

AGREEMENT SIGNED

JSW Paints to acquire Akzo Nobel for ₹12.9K cr

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Sajjan Jindal's JSW Paints (JSWP) on Friday announced acquisition of Dutch paint maker Akzo Nobel's India unit in a Rs 12,915-crore deal to become the fourth-largest player in the paint industry in the country.

JSW Paints will buy a 74.76 per cent stake in Dulux paint-maker Akzo Nobel India for Rs 8,986 crore and launch an open offer to buy another 25 per cent from open market for up to Rs 3,929.06 crore.

"JSW Paints today (Friday) entered into definitive agreements to acquire up to 74.76 per cent stake in Akzo Nobel India from Akzo Nobel NV and its affiliates, for a maximum consideration under the share purchase agreement of up to Rs 8,986 crore," it said.

Akzo Nobel NV said it has signed an agreement to sell its shareholding in Akzo Nobel India Ltd (ANIL) to the JSW Group. "The transaction is based on a total enterprise value of approximately 1.4 billion euro, representing an EV/EBITDA multiple of 22x, and includes Akzo Nobel's liquid paints and coatings business in India," it said

However, the Dutch parent firm also said the India Powder Coatings business and International Research Centre, both currently part of ANIL, will be "retained by Akzo Nobel" under full ownership.

By March 2025, ANIL's Dutch promoters group exited the Indian market. *—PTI*

India imposes anti-dumping duties on China, Taiwan

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

India has imposed anti-dumping duties on imports of plastic processing machines from China and Taiwan to protect its domestic industry.

According to a notification issued by the Ministry of Finance, investigations revealed that these machines were being exported to India at dumped prices, meaning they were sold below normal market value. This practice has caused material injury to Indian manufacturers producing similar goods.

The ministry found that the domestic industry has suffered significant harm due to these dumped imports and recommended the imposition of anti-dumping duties to remove this injury.

The duties vary between 27 per cent and 63 per cent of the cost, insurance, and freight (CIF) value of the goods, depending on the country of origin, export details, and the producer involved. *— ANI*

India, US in final stage of trade deal negotiations

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

India and the United States are in the final stretch of critical trade negotiations, with just days remaining before the 8 July deadline that could shape the future of bilateral economic ties, according to Global Trade and Research Initiative (GTRI).

India's top trade negotiator is in Washington, and both sides are working to secure a limited agreement – often referred to as a "mini-deal", modelled after the US-UK deal in May – before the clock runs out. The deadline is tied to President Trump's 90-day suspension of special country-specific tariffs, announced on April 2. If no agreement is reached by July 8, India could face renewed tariff pressures, although experts say a return to steep duties is unlikely.

The GTRI said any trade agreement with the US must not be politically driven or one-sided, and India should protect its farmers, digital ecosystem and policy space. *—ANI&PTI*

JioBlackRock Broking gets Sebi nod

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Jio BlackRock Broking Pvt Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers Pvt Ltd, has received regulatory approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to begin operations as a brokerage firm.

The company aims to offer investors affordable, transparent, and technology-driven execution services. Its parent company, Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers, is a 50:50 joint venture between Jio Financial Services Ltd (JFSL) and US-based BlackRock Inc.

With recent approvals granted to Jio BlackRock Asset Management Pvt Ltd and Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers, the broking licence enables the joint venture to provide comprehensive investment solutions.

Marc Pilgrem, MD and CEO of Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers, said the advisory arm would offer personalised advice to retail investors, while the broking platform will support self-directed investors with efficient execution.

Hitesh Sethia, MD and CEO of JFSL, said the broking entity strengthens their mission to democratise investments in India through accessible, digital-first solutions. *—PTI*

- The approvals granted to Jio BlackRock Asset Management Pvt Ltd and Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers allow the joint venture to provide comprehensive investment solutions

Groww crosses 100M app downloads

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Stock broking firm Groww has crossed 100 million app downloads, becoming the first Indian investment platform to achieve this milestone, industry sources said. The development places Groww ahead of its competitors in the country's fast-growing retail investment segment, they added.

According to app store data, Groww's download numbers have outpaced other players like Angel One, which has over 50 million downloads, and Zerodha and Upstox, with over 10 million each. The surge in downloads reflects Groww's dominant position in the market as it prepares for a public listing. *—PTI*

Crizac sets ₹233–245 price band for IPO

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Crizac, a student recruitment solutions provider, has set the price band for its initial public offering (IPO) at Rs 233-245 per equity share. The Rs 860 crore IPO will open for subscription on 2 July and close on 4 July, with anchor investor bidding scheduled for 1 July. Investors can bid for a minimum of 61 shares and multiples thereof.

The IPO is a complete offer for sale (OFS) by promoters Pinky Agarwal and Manish Agarwal, who are selling shares worth Rs 723 crore and Rs 137 crore respectively. As it is an OFS, Crizac will not receive any proceeds from the sale. The company initially aimed to raise Rs 1,000 crore but has reduced the issue size to Rs 860 crore without specifying reasons.

Based in Kolkata, Crizac operates a B2B education platform, providing international student recruitment services for institutions in the UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Over the past three years, it has processed more than 711,000 student applications. *—PTI*

Wakefit Innovations files for IPO with Sebi

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Home and furnishings company Wakefit Innovations Ltd has filed preliminary papers with markets regulator Sebi, seeking its approval to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO).

The proposed IPO of the Bengaluru-based company is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 468.2 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of 5.84 crore equity shares by the selling shareholders, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Thursday.

Wakefit proposes to utilise the proceeds from the fresh issue worth Rs 82 crore for setting up of 117 new COCO. *—PTI*

MAKEOVER AFTER 40 YEARS

Windows' 'Blue Screen of Death' to turn black

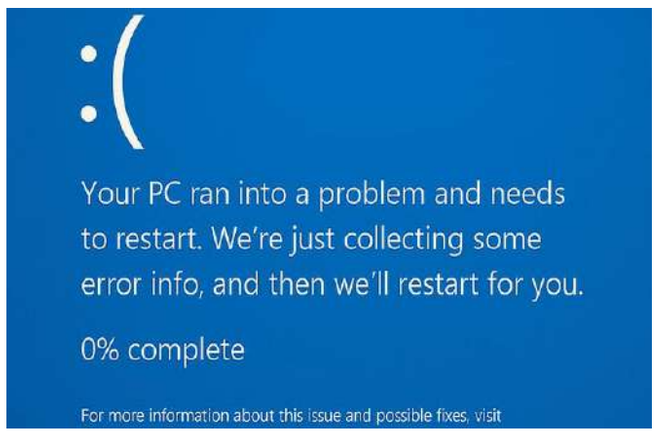
SEATTLE, 27 JUNE

Nearly every Windows user has had a run in with the infamous "Blue Screen of Death" at some point in their computing life. Now, after more than 40-years of being set against a very recognisable blue, the updated error message will soon be displayed across a black background.

The changes to the notorious error screen come as part of broader efforts by Microsoft to improve the resiliency of the Windows operating system in the wake of last year's CrowdStrike incident, which crashed millions of Windows machines worldwide.

"Now it's easier than ever to navigate unexpected restarts and recover faster," Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft said on Wednesday.

As part of that effort, Microsoft says it's "streamlining" what users experience when encountering "unexpected restarts" that cause disruptions. And that means a makeover to the infamous error screen.


:(
Your PC ran into a problem and needs to restart. We're just collecting some error info, and then we'll restart for you.
0% complete
For more information about this issue and possible fixes, visit

Beyond the now-black background, Windows' new "screen of death" has a slightly shorter message. It's also no longer accompanied by a frowning face – and instead shows a percentage completed for the restart process.

Microsoft says this "simplified" user interface for unexpected restarts will be available later this summer on all of its Windows 11 devices.

And for PCs that may not restart successfully, Microsoft on Wednesday also said it's adding a "quick machine recovery" mechanism. The will be particularly useful for during a widespread outage, the tech giant noted, as Microsoft "can broadly deploy targeted remediations" and automate fixes with this new mechanism "without requiring complex manual intervention from IT."

Microsoft said this quick machine recovery will also be "generally available" later this summer on Window 11 – with additional capabilities set to launch later in the year. *—PTI*

PhysicsWallah, CSC academy plan e-varsity

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Education company PhysicsWallah has partnered with CSC Academy (CSCA), a not-for-profit under the IT Ministry's Common Services Centres (CSC), to establish a digital university aimed at rural learners.

The Digital University will offer accredited online degree programmes and certifications, with CSCs acting as local digital learning centres to improve access to quality higher education in underserved rural areas of India.

The collaboration combines PhysicsWallah's expertise in educational and skill development programmes with CSCA's extensive CSC network across the country. Courses will be delivered in online, offline, and hybrid modes. The initiative will focus on skill-based training, developing courses and certificates in emerging fields such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and behavioural science. Additionally, PhysicsWallah will train CSCA staff and Village Level Entrepreneurs, who will support academic delivery at the grassroots level, helping to build capacity in rural communities.

This partnership aims to bridge the education gap by making quality higher education more accessible to learners in remote and underserved regions. – *PTI*

Bhatia shoots 68 in first round of Rocket Classic

DETROIT, 27 JUNE

Indian-American golfer Akshay Bhatia had a decent start of 4-under 68, but it was only good enough for a tied-44th place in the opening round of the Rocket Classic here. The world No. 36, who reached the Tour Championship in 2024, had five birdies against one bogey and was six shots behind co-leaders, South African Aldrich Potgieter and American Kevin Roy, who shot 10-under 62 each. Starting from the 10th, Bhatia, who was third at the Players Championship and had two top-10s earlier this year, birdied the opening and the 14th holes but dropped a shot on the 18th. On his second nine, he birdied the fifth and sixth and parred the rest of the holes for a 68.—*PTI*

India to host 2029 World Police & Fire Games in Gujarat

AHMEDABAD, 27 JUNE

India has won the hosting rights for the 2029 World Police & Fire Games and the event, featuring more than 10,000 athletes, will be held across three venues in Gujarat's Ahmedabad and Ekta Nagar (Kevadia). The athletes will represent police, fire, customs, and correctional services departments from over 70 countries. India will thus become the first South Asian country to host the WPFG games since its inception in 1985. The announcement came after India's final representation to the California Police Athletic Federation, which is the governing body of WPFG, last Sunday in Birmingham. "India now joins a prestigious group of past host nations including Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, China, and the United States, affirming its arrival as a central player in the global multi-sport ecosystem," a release from the state government said.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Sunder Iyer made interim Secretary General

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

The Executive Committee of the All India Tennis Association on Friday removed Anil as the federation's Secretary General, saying his position has become untenable after attaining the age of 70 and that he has already completed his four-year term. Attended by 17 of the 25 members, the EC passed a resolution by three-fourth majority to make joint secretary Iyer as interim secretary, empowering him to file a reply to the writ petition filed in the Delhi High Court by Somdev Devvarman and Purav Raja, who challenged the validity of the elections conducted in September 2024.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

WI pacer Seales fined for send-off to Cummins

BRIDGETOWN, 27 JUNE

West Indies fast bowler Jayden Seales has been fined 15% of his match fee and was given one demerit point for his fiery send-off to Pat Cummins on the first day of the opening Test against Australia here. He breached Level 1 of the ICC code of conduct, and a demerit point was added to Seales' disciplinary record as it was the second offence in 24 months, according to the International Cricket Council. According to the ICC's code of conduct, Seales was in breach of article 2.5: "using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon his/her dismissal during an International Match."—*PTI*

Bumrah likely to miss 2nd Test against England

Jasprit's absence will rob India's bowling unit of control

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Jasprit Bumrah's possible absence from next week's second Test against England in Birmingham will rob India's bowling unit of control, not an ideal element to miss when the visitors are trying to go level at a ground where they have never won a red-ball match.

The passage between overs 65 and 82 of the first Test at Leeds, which England won by five wickets to take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series, will offer further validation to that grim fact.

England were 286 for four when India's pace talisman ended that spell with overall figures of 19-3-57-0, and he was not summoned for another over.

Perhaps, skipper Shubman Gill wanted to preserve him for the second new ball, which was due in 15 overs, and it also aligned with India's workload management plan for their premier pacer.

Jasprit Bumrah

England were still 85 runs away from a win, and some tight overs, probably dotted with a couple of wickets, would have set the stage perfectly for Bumrah's return in the 80th over.

But by the time that mark arrived, England were 349 for five over four runs an over, and a mere 22 runs separating them from an incredible victory. Now, India might just have to make peace with the reality of not having the 31-year-old in their ranks at Edgbaston. Mohammed Siraj was distinctly unlucky in the second innings not to have a wicket despite hitting better lines, but his effort in the first innings left a lot to be desired when he eased the pressure Bumrah built from the other end while giving away plenty of boundary balls.

Minimum 7-day standdown for concussed players: ICC

The ICC on Friday announced new playing conditions across formats, including a minimum seven-day stand-down period for players diagnosed with concussion, trialling a new wide-ball rule in limited-overs cricket, besides changes with regards to boundary catches.

Cricket's global governing body said on its website that the new playing conditions for Tests were implemented with the start of the new World Test Championship cycle for 2025-2027, with Sri Lanka taking on Bangladesh in the first Test at Galle from 17-21 June. —*PTI*

UNDER PRESSURE

FIH Pro League: Indian women look to snap losing streak

BERLIN, 27 JUNE

The Indian women's hockey team would look to break its six-match losing streak and avoid relegation from the FIH Pro League with positive results against China, starting with the first match here on Saturday.

The Indian women are currently placed at the bottom of the nine-team table with 10 points from 14 games and are in danger of relegation to the second-tier FIH Nations Cup in 2026.

It's not what Hockey India had in mind when Harendra Singh was brought back on board as the head coach.

After a relatively good outing at the home leg earlier this year, the Indian women lost six consecutive matches against Australia, Argentina, and Belgium (two matches against one opponent) in the European leg of the tournament.

India will be determined to sign off their Pro League campaign with valuable wins in back-to-back matches against fourth-placed China on Saturday and Sunday here.

"It is a very crucial double header for us over the weekend. But we will draw inspiration from the Indian men's team, who finished with an inspiring win against Belgium," said captain Salima Tete. "This Pro League outing has been a learning experience with several grey areas that we need to work on as a team. We will be introspecting on this performance when we go back home, but for now, our focus is on doing well against China," she said.

India will take confidence from their last outing against China, where they beat them 3-0 in the pool stage and from a closely-fought final (1-0) to win the Asian Champions Trophy in Bihar in November last year. —*PTI*

India women eye a bright series with World Cup in mind

NOTTINGHAM, 27 JUNE

ENGLAND W VS INDIA W 1st T20I

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	30
ENG W Won:	22
INDIA W Won:	8

ENG W vs IND W Match starts at **7.00 pm IST**

India's build-up to the T20 World Cup 2026 regains attention as Harmanpreet Kaur and company take on England in an exciting five-match T20I series starting Saturday, June 28. The series kicks off at the Trent Bridge ground in Nottingham, where Harmanpreet's in-form brigade looks to carry the momentum gained in the 50-over version in Sri Lanka onto the shortest format and take an early lead over the hosts. captain Nat Sciver-Brunt wants clean sweep against India

Harmanpreet Kaur

The ICC showpiece is almost a year away, but this series is a perfect stepping stone after their disappointing group stage exit from last year's edition. The management will attempt to draft some initial ideas about the peculiar playing surfaces and the fickle weather patterns that jointly make playing cricket a unique experience in England.

The rubber might also give the think-tank an inkling of the kind of players who could potentially make an impact here. The return of explosive opener Shafali Verma apart, India has added some new names, such as Kranti Goud, Sree Charani, and Sayali Satghar, to their squad. —*PTI*

Nat Sciver-Brunt

Manchester City's Doku celebrates scoring the opening goal against Juventus **PHOTO: X/@MANCITY**

Manchester City beat Juventus 5-2

ORLANDO, 27 JUNE

Manchester City won Group G of the Club World Cup with a dominant performance on Thursday, beating Juventus 5-2 at Camping World Stadium.

Man City went ahead 2-1 on an own goal in the 26th minute when defender Pierre Kalulu, attempting to intercept a pass at close range, sent the ball into the net.

The rout was on from there. Erling Haaland, Phil Foden, and Savinho scored in the second half to make it 5-1. Haaland's goal was the 300th of his career.

Man City midfielder Rodri, last year's Ballon d'Or winner, made his first start since he had knee ligament surgery in September. He left for a substitute in the 66th minute.

CLUB WORLD CUP

Jeremy Doku opened the scoring for Man City in the ninth minute, and Teun Koopmeiners equalized two minutes later. Dusan Vlahovic scored in the 84th minute for the Italian club, which finished second in the group.

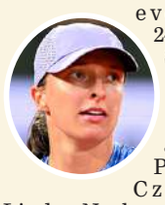
Juventus showed some late life when Vlahovic brought the ball into close range and found the back of the net.

Manchester City will face the Group H runner-up on 30 June in Orlando. Juventus will take on the Group H winner on July 1 at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens. "Manchester City is a very high-level team. It's very difficult to play against them. —*PTI*

Iga reaches maiden grasscourt final

TAIPEI, 6 MAY

Iga Swiatek beat Jasmine Paolini 6-1, 6-3 to reach her maiden grasscourt final in Bad Homburg on Friday, ahead of Wimbledon 2025. Former World No. 1 Swiatek took down second-seeded Italian Paolini in an hour and six minutes to book her place in the final of the WTA 500 event.The 24-year-old Swiatek will face either USA's Jessica Pegula or Czechia's Linda Noskova in the Pole's first final since last year's French Open summit clash, where she beat Paolini to clinch her fourth title at Roland Garros. Swiatek, who has slipped to eighth in the WTA Rankings. —*PTI*



Sable, Sindhu laud SAI Bengaluru's evolution

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

With a smart track that captures every stride, advanced sports science labs, and a research kitchen for customised recipes, Sports Authority of India's Southern Centre here has transformed into a world-class facility that is endorsed by athletes like two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and top steeplechaser Avinash Sable.

Once a modest training base, a "cumulative investment exceeding Rs 140 crore" by the sports ministry has seen the centre undergo a sweeping transformation in the last decade.

For 3000m steeplechase national record-holder Sable, who first trained at the centre in 2017, the upgrades have made a tangible difference.

"I came here for the first time in 2017, so from that time to today, there have been a lot of changes. Earlier, there was only one synthetic track, but now there are two," Sable told a select group of reporters here. —*PTI*

WI star cricketer accused of sexual assault, rape by 11 women

An unnamed West Indies men's cricketer has been accused of several counts of sexual assault, sexual harrasment and rape, as per reports in West Indies-based media outlets. According to a video report by Caribbean-based SportsMax TV, the cricketer in question is from Guyana and is a part of the current national team setup. Further information in the video report states that the cricketer has been accused by at least 11 women. However, no charge has been filed as of yet against the cricketer. Cricket West Indies (CWI) has also refused to comment on the matter. —*PTI*

Vinicius Junior scores and assists in Real Madrid's 3-0 win over Salzburg

PHILADELPHIA, 27 JUNE

Vinicius Junior scored a goal and assisted on another in Real Madrid's 3-0 win over Salzburg that secured the Spanish powerhouse first place in the Club World Cup's Group H and a spot in the round of 16.

Vinicius gave the 64,811 soaking wet fans at Lincoln Financial Field something to cheer for by scoring on a left-footed shot right outside the penalty box in the 40th minute. Jude Bellingham left Vinícius in a position to score with a breakaway pass that took advantage of the wet field conditions caused by the rain.

Eight minutes later, a deflected pass by Mamady Diambou left Vinícius one-on-one against Joane Gadou inside Salzburg's penalty box. Having no angle to shoot, Vinícius delivered a backheel pass to Federico Valverde that left the Uruguayan wide open to score from 10 yards out.

Antonio Rüdiger suffered an apparent hamstring injury in the 60th minute after completing a long sprint down the right wing. He continued playing, but was subbed out six minutes later. His availability will be one to watch for Real Madrid's upcoming game as they are thin at the center back position due to multiple injuries and a suspension to Raúl Asencio.—*PTI*

POST WIMBLEDON DRAW

Alcaraz against Fognini in the first round

Carlos Alcaraz

LONDON, 27 JUNE

Carlos Alcaraz will begin his bid for a third consecutive Wimbledon championship and put his career-best 18-match winning streak on the line by facing the volatile Fabio Fognini in the first round at Centre Court when the tournament begins Monday.The singles brackets for the grass-court Grand Slam tournament were set in Friday's draw, including potential men's quarterfinals of No. 1 Jannik Sinner against No. 7 Lorenzo Musetti, No. 4 Jack Draper against No. 6 Novak Djokovic who has won seven of his 24 major trophies at the All England Club No. 2 Alcaraz against No. 8 Holger Rune, and No. 3 Alexander Zverev against No. 5 Taylor Fritz.The possible women's quarterfinals are No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka vs. No. 6 Madison Keys, and No. 4 Jasmine Paolini vs. No. 5 Zheng Qinwen in the top half, and No. 2 Coco Gauff vs. No. 8 Iga Swiatek or 2022 champion Elena Rybakina, and No. 3 Jessica Pegula vs. No. 7 Mirra Andreeva in the bottom half. In addition to Sinner, Djokovic, Draper, and 2024 semifinalist Musetti, the top half has No. 10 Ben Shelton and No. 13 Tommy Paul of the United States, along with Alexander Bublik, an unpredictable and underarm-serving player from Kazakhstan. He reached his first major quarterfinal at the French Open by defeating Draper his potential third-round opponent next week and then won a grass-court title at Halle, Germany, for the second time, beating Sinner along the way. —*PTI*

Coco Gauff

Runner Twinkle Chaudhary suspended for doping

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Multiple National Games medal-winning middle-distance runner Twinkle Chaudhary has been provisionally suspended by the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) after testing positive for a prohibited steroid.

The 28-year-old Chaudhary had clinched a gold in the 4x400m women's relay competition at the Uttarakhand edition of the National Games earlier this year. She had also won a silver in the 800m race and a bronze in the 4x400m mixed relay.Chaudhary tested positive for Methyl testosterone, a banned anabolic steroid.In its update, the AIU stated that the runner has been issued a "notice of allegation". The next step would be a hearing in which Chaudhary will get a chance to explain herself.Chaudhary, who hails from Jalandhar, set a new meet record with a time of 2:00.71sec in the 800m event of the 28th National Federation Senior Athletics Championships in Kochi in April.

Earlier this month, she won an 800m silver medal at the Taiwan Open with a time of 2:06.96s. —*PTI*